

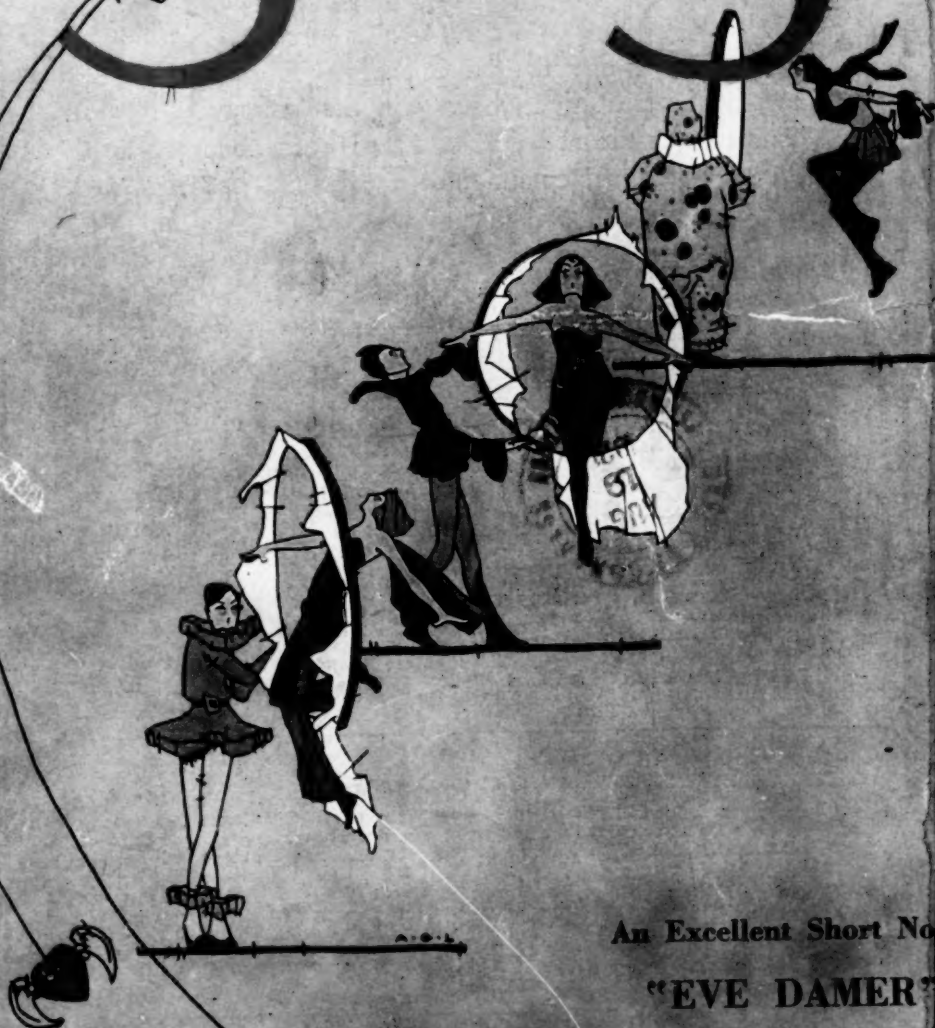
SEPTEMBER, 1921

NO. 1 AND 1 ISSUED

35 Cents

The SMART SET

Edited by
George Jean Nathan
and
H.L. Mencken.



An Excellent Short No

"EVE DAMER"

by

ALBERT KINROSS

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HALF A HUNDRED BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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The Companion

By *Arthur Davison Ficke*

*I WISH that by the singing streams
No slender willows ever grew—
And that the sky held never gleams
Of silver cloud against the blue—
And that the quiet of my dreams
Stirred with no memories of you.*

*I would go out and walk the hills,
And laugh into the April air,
And pick the golden daffodils—
Could I forget your breast is fair,
Or see in all the foaming rills
Aught but your white feet dancing there.*

*They tell me that the spring has come—
But what is spring—while far away
The echoings of your steps delay?—
And the green lands that should be dumb
Speak but of you—who turn not home
Beside me through the golden day.*

AUG 17 1921

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Vol. LXVI

SEPTEMBER, 1921

No. 1

The SMART SET The Aristocrat Among Magazines



The Human Mind

By Philip Owen

PALE candidates for the doctorate wearing out the books in the library in the pursuit of a thesis on the use of the semicolon by Wordsworth; courageous publishers revising a putatively definitive history to suit the prejudices of the subjects of that history; tired doctors of philosophy lecturing to bored classes in Lit. 3; fat women with cracked voices reading discourses on the early life of Shakespeare before the Pogis Center Literary Club; paunchy retired ministers of the gospel delivering illustrated lectures on the Holy Land before perspiring Chautauquas; bald-headed scatterbrains writing editorials for the local gazettes on "The Trend of the Times"; members of Congress asking for leave to print; ecstatic publishers announcing the arrival of Another O. Henry in each issue of the *Publishers' Weekly*; shrewd gazabos conducting courses in the short story; ex-pantsmakers bringing to perfection the Art of the Motion Picture; long-winded whiskers writing inspirational

messages for the masses; eight hundred and thirty-eight whimsical essayists making Charles Lamb rotate in his grave; irate taxpayers writing to their favorite newspapers; literary editors kissing every book on the brow as it comes from the press. . . .

College annuals bound in purple ooze, and filled with nine hundred and thirty-seven photographs of young men with their hair slicked back; lists of the hundred best books compiled by congenital idiots; house-organs with an account of the baseball game between the shipping department and the filing room, and a message of Punch, Pep, and Progress to all the employes; the dramatic works of Percy Mackaye; the editorial pages of country papers with the essays of Lydia Pinkham occupying a prominent position; little magazines of inspiration handing out new dodges for getting past St. Peter; manuals to success containing the thirty-seven steps by which Hans Pfedderpisch became the world's greatest sausage manufacturer; Green-

wich Village blasts against an orthodox world, running out of powder after the third round; trade magazines for the enterprising undertaker and piano salesman; travel magazines for the folks who have never been more than eight miles from home; fiction magazines in

which the author competes, unsuccessfully, with garters and depilatories. . . .

Dr. Frank Crane, America's great philosopher; Edgar F. Guest, America's great poet; Harold Bell Wright, America's great novelist. . . .



Love and Time

By George Sterling

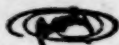
*LOVE has the dreamful Past,
By each sad memory whose sweet regret
Shall not depart,
And each dear yesterday whose voices yet
Are in the heart,
Too peaceless not to last.*

*Love has the b rief today,
Which were not day without his cruel bliss
Within the breast.
We, who forget not all we said amiss,
Remember best
The words we did not say.*

*Love has the years to be,
Since unforgotten are the joy and pain
We dreamt to stay.
Unless tomorrow bring his feet again
What were today,
And what, O Love! were we?*



IT is a woman's instinctive cruelty that makes her refuse to marry a man the first time he asks her; it is the same sense of cruelty that makes her accept each time thereafter.



ACYNIC is a person who discovers mean things about himself and then says them about the rest of us.



BEING told by a pretty woman that he is a sinner has been the downfall of many a man.

Eve Damer

[A Complete Novelette]

By Albert Kinross

I

VIGNOLLES was fond of pictures. Often and often he would drag me into the most impossible shows—though some of them weren't so bad; at the Grafton, the Leicester, and all sorts of odd galleries, out in Chelsea, off Bond Street, or wherever a placard or some unusually bilious poster caught his eye. Or he might draw me into the National Gallery itself.

"Just for half an hour," he would say; "or till we get bored. I hate reading; but I like pictures—they tell you all about it. You look; and you're done with them—a book takes hours and hours—though there are books and books."

I have forgotten most of these exhibitions; but one I still remember.

"Somebody's portraits," he had explained. "You *must* see them—at least, it said so in my morning paper—a fellow called Edwards. He's supposed to be remarkable—and cruel—does all the nuts."

We went along together, and paid our money and bought a catalogue; and this time I really was interested; for most of these pictures were impressions of well-known people—politicians and such-like—seen from a very uncompromising angle. And between them fluttered a half-dozen "great ladies"; or, at least, ladies conspicuous in the social world or of an equally outstanding "smartness." Edwards had not been kind to them; but still, one guessed he was the fashion, and that to have one's portrait

painted by him was something of a privilege. He could pick and choose.

There was Lady Caroline Semphill, I remember—an evil-looking creature—at least, Edwards had made her look evil; though to my mind—and I had met her once or twice—she was just an effusive, over-ample woman who loved to perform in the center of a crowd.

When I'd recovered from her, I found Vignolles in the clutches of a lady clothed in leopard skins and other barbaric ornaments. She was smoking a cigarette out of a long tortoise-shell holder and addressing him loudly and almost fiercely—as though she owned him and the gallery and the pictures and the visitors, and didn't care a tinker's cuss for any of the lot.

Vignolles was not embarrassed, though he ought to have been. But it takes a good deal to embarrass Vignolles; and here was a case in point.

"What do you think of *me*?" we heard her ask him; and next she had led him off to where she was shown as only Edwards dared show her. A predatory object, a veritable bird of prey, he had made of her; with her aquiline nose slightly accentuated, hard-eyed, and hands that looked like claws.

"You aren't as bad as all that," said Vignolles, smiling. "What are you going to do to him?"

"Keep him waiting," she laughed. "He's always hard up, isn't he? But still there's something in it," she conceded. "And he's got my hair right—he's got *that* right." One gathered she was proud of her hair.

In the portrait there were coils of it, and a tawny mass below the wreath that crowned her. She was in an evening gown, and the face wasn't any too pleasant—brazen, lean, nervous; but Edwards had somehow managed to show you the sombre glory of her hair. And it wasn't dyed either, though he'd been pretty rough on the made-up face below it.

"Let's have a drink," said Vignolles when she'd done with him.

He hadn't presented me, nor in any way drawn me in; but, of course, I knew who she was without looking her up in the catalogue. For years that fine face of hers had been in all the picture-papers. No, it wasn't by any means a fine face as Edwards had drawn it; but, still, not so very long ago, it *had* been fine; filled with vitality, and daring, and power of a certain kind—and, even now, Edwards, if he had liked, could have done something else with it.

"Didn't know you knew her," I said, as we went down the stairs together.

"Rather astonishes me sometimes as well," he answered. "I don't know why she keeps it up—I'm no use to her—never was, for that matter. I suppose she's got what she wanted," he ended; "Damer's in the limelight, and she's got a double dose of it. You can't escape her, can you?"

No, try as one might, there was no escaping Mrs. Damer; nor Damer either, for that matter. He, of course, is in politics; and Mrs. Damer is in everything else.

II

We'd had our drink and taken a turn in the Park before Vignolles came out with it. Now, close to the dinner hour, the London season in full blast, there were a good many potential Mrs. Damer's strolling here or sitting in the dull green chairs. But it would require a special kind of courage to go as far as she had gone and a fiercer egotism than anyone might read on these controlled and guarded faces; and a fiercer intelligence too, I guessed, from what I knew of some of them.

We'd chosen our places under a spreading tree that made a pool of shadow. We were alone and yet not alone, as one often is in London. To Vignolles, who had wandered so far and forever been much of a spectator, if not an actual outsider, there was always a certain grim enjoyment to be found in any place like this. I remember he began by telling me about a maiden aunt of his who'd died and left him five hundred pounds. It wasn't much; but it was the price of what he called a "beano"; and "Guess what I did with it?" he asked me, grinning pleasantly. "Put it in the Savings Bank," I suggested.

He grinned some more.

"No, I spent it on these people—the kind you see around you. It wasn't bad fun. They were worth it."

"You moved in what is called Society?" I asked him.

"I suppose that's what one would call it. I certainly moved. I went to the West Indies and back again; I had a week in Scotland and some months here—trying to be respectable. It didn't agree with me."

We sat on in the long summer evening; we dined; and then we sat again; and by the time we separated and sought our beds that night I had the story of the maiden aunt and her five hundred pounds. It threw a little light on Mrs. Damer. Yet, as Vignolles said, "It might have been some other girl—it just happened to be she. Twenty-five years ago—that makes her about fifty—"

But I will let him tell the rest of the story instead of getting at it in snatches.

III

TWENTY-FIVE years ago—it began—I'd had a spell of England. There was that five hundred pounds to collect, and I had just a hankering—a sort of a romantic hankering—to see my father and my mother. They didn't approve of me—I hadn't taken the snaffle and the curb—I hadn't settled down as a Vignolles ought. There was the family business, and no one to carry it on if I backed out.

And I had backed out—run away at sixteen and joined the Army, and been to sea when I'd done with that, and wandered a trifle round half the globe. I'd written to my sister occasionally—it was she who'd told me about the five hundred; but, apart from her, nobody seemed to care much. They'd given me up as a bad job. Still, as I said to my father once, "We Vignolles have been in trade for three generations; it's about time one of us started doing something else. It's against Darwin and Evolution to go on forever." He was hot on Darwin and Huxley in his way; yet when it came to a matter of business he threw his hobbies overboard and what had been good enough for him was good enough for me. However, for the time being, I was a sudden and sumptuous capitalist, and I cast round for ways and means of spending my Aunt Betty's savings in a way to do her credit or to make her turn round in her grave—I'm not sure which.

It was winter, and when my family and I had had enough of one another I found the right kind of excursion advertised in one of the papers. "Six weeks in the West Indies," it said, or something similar, and the prices ranged from a hundred guineas. First-class ship; first-class chef; everything first-class. I'd never traveled that way before—usually worked my passage. It'd be a change for me; and I wanted to see the West Indies, especially in winter, when half the world was grey and cold.

I bought a steamer-trunk full of clothes, and a deck-chair and a rug, and a large-sized ulster for the first days out. I was new as a guinea and just as smart. I wasn't going to impose on anybody or pretend I was the Count, but, just for once in a way, I was going to wallow in the lap of luxury—and then forget it.

We started from Southampton in a gale, though in a day or two we got clear of it, into sunshine and blue skies; but the gale had broken the ice. You can't be cold and distant when you're seasick, and so everybody was beginning to know everybody else. We were most of us leisurely people with daughters, well-

bred, well-off, with a sprinkling of stock-brokers and rich men from the City. A few of us had titles, and a couple of bishops and a dean and a newspaper-proprietor kept an eye on us; and, taking us all in all, we were a classy crowd. And as I hadn't been seasick and had made myself useful, I was beginning to get popular and thoroughly enjoyed it. I liked these people: most of them were born loafers like myself; but they could afford it all the time, and, of course, I couldn't. I daresay I might have found a lady with enough money for both of us—a trifle tough, perhaps, and not too young. However, I wasn't out for that game. Nor any other worth mentioning. I was out for fun—for six good weeks of it—and then I'd disappear.

Well, it was pretty amusing. I've told you I liked these people. They were out for fun as well; and as I'd had no youth worth mentioning, I found myself making up for it like a boy just fresh from school. At thirty-odd, one has no business to be so confoundedly young; but this was a holiday, the first real let-up I'd had in fifteen years; and in many ways my life had been a hard life, though in other ways it hadn't.

To me those people were so much cream. They had breeding, manners, freedom, and good looks. I daresay I exaggerated it all, just as a housemaid does who's reading a story about a Duke. But on the surface—and I needed no more than the surface—these were the most marvelous people that I had ever struck.

I learned to dance again, and I played cards with the men and sometimes with the women, and by the time we were nine days out I'd made one or two friendships of a kind. There was a dark girl with masses of tawny hair; there was a man who'd smashed himself up hunting and been ordered a sea-voyage after months in bed. These two I remember; the rest are all forgotten or else blurred. The dark girl's mother is just a gracious shadow nowadays, and I don't think she ever was much more.

As you may have guessed, I was pretty simple—one of those prattlers who,

given a little encouragement, come out with everything—empty the whole bag. I found myself telling that dark girl all about it. Of how I had wandered and sailed and fought men with my fists; and sung in the chorus in Grand Opera and gone with pilgrims to a temple on a hill—it was rather mixed. There were horses I'd ridden and strange towns I'd come to, and women, half savage, half child—I slurred them over; but she wanted everything, from the scents that madden you in a tropical night to deserts where you rock on your camel and follow the stars. Thirst and hunger and danger and weariness—she wanted the whole lot. I'd seen a good deal of the world in my own way, and most of it was cruel, looking at it from here—from this security. But she loved the cruelty of it, the hardness of it, as well as its beauty.

"You'll see something of all that," I said, "when we touch land."

She wasn't listening. She was looking me over, much as a boy might do, with shining eyes; and then,

"You're wonderful—quite wonderful," she answered, "and you don't know it!"

I daresay that found my vanity, though I pretended it didn't. I knew I was slightly different from these other men whose lives had been made for them; but that wasn't being "wonderful." It seemed to me then that to be "wonderful" you must have masses of gold-flecked hair and the courage to talk to a man like myself, of no account, and make a god of him.

I don't know that you would have called Eve Drummond a beauty. She was rather more than that. She had personality, daring, sex—it is these things I recall so much more than her features, her colour, and the cool strength of her lithe body. There were better-looking girls on board than she; but no one half so vivid, so charged with power and energy. I guessed these at first rather than tested them; for, so far, she had only sat up in her chair and made me talk.

"Do you know, you've never had a

chance?" she said, sizing me up in her direct way. "Why didn't that stuffy father of yours send you to Eton and Oxford or the Army—he could afford it, couldn't he?"

We must have been pretty thick by then for her to talk so freely. I know I'd confessed about the five hundred pounds. I'd kept nothing back from her: she knew me as I was, and she seemed to like it. Bless her!

IV

It's no good asking me about the West Indies. I believe we landed on a dozen islands and anchored in as many bays or harbours, or just lay out to sea, with pinnaces going and coming. And black men in boats rocked alongside and offered us things they had to sell. But that happens everywhere; and to me the West Indies are just Eve Drummond.

I don't know who began it—does one ever know, unless one is refused? And, even then. . . . But I daresay the sun began it, and that abundant leisure, and the two pagan hearts inside of us that opened as flowers open to the light. Maybe, in such a release from work and care and custom, it was the only sensible thing to do. In any case, we did it. And I have never regretted it; nor, I feel sure, has she. We ought to have closed down again when we got back to England—looked back upon it as a dream, a foretaste of Perfection—something that had never happened before, could never happen again—and been thankful. But that is anticipating. Just now we landed on islands and ruled the world like Kings and Queens. We did exactly as we pleased. Old Mrs. Drummond was always gracious. I've never discovered what she thought: I only know what she said. And, perhaps, seeing me so leisured and so affluent—who knows? And the other passengers? I fancy we made a show for them, or offered them a good example. One or two followed it and became engaged.

I don't remember that we two ever *did* become engaged. Where was the use of registering the obvious, of making a

contract when nothing was refused? She could have asked me for all I had to offer and I would have given it, wondering why she asked. It was better than engagements—better than a honeymoon. We wanted nothing of one another except the magic of discovery, the revelation of companionship. Passion was there for the taking—but it was finer so. Passion is old and shadowed with death, but Love is ever new; and, somehow, by instinct, by memories deeper than ourselves, we clung to this virginity—this wonder and amazement—a happiness unclouded that started afresh with each new day.

There was one island with a sandy cove we had found, and all that afternoon we bathed from it and laughed and lay in the sun. She wore one of my new suits of pajamas and I another; and when the silk clung to her I praised her beauty; and when the great coil of her wonderful hair was loose and spread in the sun to dry, we both admired it as one might admire a picture or something impersonal made by stranger hands.

She blushed when the Spaniards of another island asked if she were my wife—they could not understand it otherwise. I had said "Yes," and told her. We had hired ponies and ridden out on them to see the world. At a plantation we had halted, and there the women had offered us a meal; and to her it was an adventure, and these simple people thought her marvelous. She dazzled them too—just as I was dazzled, as were most people who came near her. And later there was the ride home in the moonlight with half the village keeping us company. They had decked her with flowers and stuffed my pockets with cigars; so that we went back like conquerors and found our ship and pinnaces waiting. It was an adventure right enough, and she fairly blazed with it.

"Why go back?" she had asked; and she would have stayed. At a word she would have thrown the whole of Europe overboard and followed me. We might have found a life in Mexico, or somewhere in the South. At times I have played with the idea and wondered.

I wasn't entirely mad; indeed, if one comes of a respectable family, there's always a residuum of respectability hidden away somewhere inside of one. Perhaps it was that which held me back, which made me in some measure her champion; which all along had driven me to feel that, sooner than any harm should come to her, I would die a thousand deaths or go through fire and water. On the ship that night I took her hand in mine and kissed it—the first time I had done anything so intimate. She wanted more. She did not know she wanted more; but I did, and blessed her innocence. I had not come there to disturb it. If I did anything, I would do the only right thing and wait till we were back again in England.

Beyond her and the man who had been smashed up in the hunting-field and who wheeled himself about in a special kind of chair, I don't recollect anybody on board who mattered. This man looked on at us. Once he smiled up at me in his pleasant way—he often used to smile, and no wonder!

"Aren't you going in pretty deep?" he asked. "It's all right out here." And then: "She'd do well on the stage," he added; "it's the same temperament."

He followed that up with questions about the last island and wanted to know whether he'd missed much by not getting ashore.

It might have been a warning—it might even have been meant for one. I let it go. I had no doubts—no ears for anybody else; no eyes for anybody else. She filled me. It must have been the same with her; for, "Lots of men have wanted to kiss me," she once said; "but I have never wanted to kiss anybody but you. I don't know why—I can't help it."

She was amazingly frank, as the worst women are—and the best. She had a most alarming candour. It frightened many people; but me it did not frighten. For it seemed to me that I understood and knew her; and, maybe it was my pride or maybe it was out of love for her, I swore I would win her

in the usual way—as her mother had been won and her grandmother. She was worth it—she was worth anything, I said. I'd work for her; I'd settle down and win her.

V

THE pair of us had no end of a hump when England showed up out of the mists and we were back again in the cold weather. Those frigid shores, that tidy landscape, made us feel that all the prose of things was heaped together in this bleak island. Though it looked so rich, it looked poor enough in all that made life worth the living. Pure idiocy, of course! But remember, we were just come out of Paradise.

I don't know that she felt it as strongly as I did. For such as she there would be alleviations—friends, the warmth and light of splendid houses, sport, money to burn, town and country, and leisure and capacity to make the most of them. But still, what I felt she felt too. We knew all about one another; how I was going to see my father and have it out with him; and then I would go North and have it out with her people. From what she said, they did not appear to be very formidable, provided one made the right impression. She, at least, had never been afraid of them; or of anybody else, for that matter. So we had settled it. At Southampton we went ashore; in London we separated. She was going North again. In London Mrs. Drummond, Eve and I put up for the night at the same hotel.

A maid had arrived from somewhere and a manservant—there was a house in town, but it wasn't worth opening it for the one night. The servants hovered round and took their orders; and at Euston I put Mrs. Drummond into a carriage marked "Reserved." They traveled in style. And next Eve grabbed me by the arm, and marching me up and down the platform, "Mind you write," she said; "every blessed day—I will. And when you've settled with your father come up and see mine. I'll get him ready."

Of the two, she was the man of us. I'd never bothered much about such detail until now. I'd lived in a less deliberate world, where individuals count and families do not exist. But I was done with all that; I realized I was done with all that. And when I took Mrs. Drummond's hand and wished her a pleasant journey and had been invited to come and visit, I realized it very completely, and felt that that was their convention, and how I would have to fit in with it and be measured by it and stay within that way of life for all the rest of mine. But I'd accepted that, hadn't I? With all my heart and soul!

Their train started, Eve's face framed in the window. I waved. She waved. Then I went off to see my father.

I found him in his office. It was a "mail day" and he was busy.

"Come in tomorrow," he said, "or dine with us at seven."

I went down the musty staircase; I crossed the musty yard. His packing-room and offices were in an old house since demolished—a fine old house that had formerly belonged to one of those past merchants who weren't above living where they traded. It was in Basinghall Street. But now the City of London had become too valuable and too crowded for such an extravagance.

I meandered on, tasting that flood of life, so masculine, so ant-like, and so intent. Between the Bank and Ludgate Circus I seemed the only loafer. I carried a stick and sauntered. Once or twice I caught the eye of a young man looking at me with envy. I was brown and fit and fresh. The sea and sun had done their best for me; while here in London, at the end of a long winter, men had no colour and all the druggist shops were selling stuffs for coughs and colds. That would be my life, I said. But Eve was worth it. I realized then that all those men were selling themselves for women and children and a home; and after that they seemed more human, easier to understand; even rather heroic, I felt, as I watched them hurrying upon their business, broken into it, habituated.

In a crowded place where men sat up at a counter and wolfed their food I had lunch; and again I detected looks of envy, almost of enquiry, as though I were one of the lucky ones who had escaped and they wanted to know my secret—how I did it. My mind went back to Arabs eating in the shade, to brown men resting beside their yoke of oxen, to the leisure and the space of sunlit lands, and people who, having filled themselves, could take their ease. There was no ease for my neighbours at the counter. One by one they bustled out again and others took their places.

I wandered down Holborn, and so to Oxford Street; and now, where there had been crowds of men before, were crowds of women, gazing into shop-windows, devouring hats and under-clothing with their eyes, and frocks and fal-lals. It occurred to me that the men working farther east were slaving away to provide these women with money to spend in the west. I looked them over, and hardly one of them seemed worth it; and the older and harsher the woman, the more she seemed to hunger for fine clothes. I thought of other, duskier women, who let the sun ripen their beauty and sea and air put youth into their eyes. They didn't last so long perhaps; but they gave their strength to their children, delight and service to their husbands. . . .

I turned away. Eve Drummond was worth it all, I said to myself. She would take, perhaps, but what would she not give! And here, again, in the thin light of London, I saw the sombre gold that filled her hair, laid out to the sun and spread before us like a robe. I saw her feet marking the sand, dancing towards me—she, slim in those silk pajamas that clung to her and shaped her body and its pride. And I saw her again, decked with flowers, as we had ridden back amid our cloud of Spaniards, her face alight, her lips parted with the joy of an adventure. She made this London world seem common and cheap and tawdry; and by that time I had come to Regent's Park and sat down on a bench.

I killed an hour at the Zoo after that and visited my friend the bison. I bought him a bag of buns and commiserated with him on the disappearance of a noble race. There are not many bisons left in the world, are there? And these few are but a survival—an exhibit more than a species.

He ate his buns; and he was old, mangy, and sorrowful; and, like me, he lived alone.

"When you die you will be stuffed," I said. "The world hasn't much use for you: it could neither tame you nor find room for you, and so you'll have to go. I'm sorry, Bison."

He finished his bag of buns and asked for more.

I brought him more.

"You, my lad, were too strong, too primitive, too simple," I began; and then the other people came along and spoiled it.

VI

I FOUND my mother and sister at our house and we waited for my father. The house was in St. John's Wood, one of those large grey stucco affairs which were easily run in the days when you could get plenty of servants. My father owned the house, and we children had been born and brought up in it.

All that quarter of London was intimate and near to me—as it is to-day. The house itself, long passed to other hands, is still standing; and, somehow, a part of me will always linger there—in spite of other houses, other lands. I still remember how every time I went back to it the old familiar feel of the place hit me—of everything inside of it and outside; from the sooty trees and rhododendrons in the garden to the heavy mahogany I had looted when I was a boy—I suppose every boy has stolen things out of sideboards. There were always biscuits and figs and raisins in ours, and a sticky syrup my mother liked—you mixed it with water. And there were cupboards too with glass and china, and other things I'd broken and been cursed for breaking. But here

were my mother and my sister. They were not a bit surprised when I walked in.

"You're staying for dinner?" said my mother.

She would have asked a tramp to stay—it was her nature. The world to her was a place full of people waiting to be fed, and she was there to feed them. She was a fine cook, of a school that's gone and done with; and she wasn't above rolling up her sleeves and spending a morning in the kitchen.

My sister was not so proficient. She danced and went to parties; she had friends, she went shopping; and just then she had become engaged to a young stockbroker—a fellow called Carey-Holt. As a young man he was tolerable. He had his season and after that he passed into the ranks of the prosperous bores. One accepted him. There he was, and one knew exactly what he was going to say or do. But just now he was young and vivacious and Netta regarded herself as happy. I suppose she was. Happiness depends on what you want.

I don't know that I ever loved my mother or that she loved me. She wasn't built that way—some women aren't. Thinking her over calmly, I've concluded that she was just a natural force, like wind, or rain, or sunshine. She bore her children easily; she ate and drank heartily; she slept soundly; and I'd never known her to have a day's illness. She liked to go to theatres and foreign watering-places, and she liked to see people sitting round her table. Instead of love, she gave me a strong body—that, after all, is a good deal; and today, as I came in, she didn't put herself out, except to ask me to stay and share her dinner.

"Where have you been?" she added, looking up from one of my father's socks—she was mending a hole in it.

"To the West Indies and back again," I answered.

She wasn't astonished.

"On business?" she asked.

"No, I've been spending Aunt Betty's savings."

She laughed at that.

"Poor old Betty!" she said. "When she was a young girl, she wanted to marry the postman; but, of course, father wouldn't let her; and so she never married anybody. He went off to America and did very well."

I always liked talking to her about her father. He had farmed somewhere in the north of Ireland and his chief merit, so I gathered, was to have raised seven handsome daughters. They all married well, except Aunt Betty. My own father had gone to Belfast on business, and there he had met and won my mother. It had been rather a romance on his side. I guessed now that she would have married any man able to give her a home and some position in a big city. She loved big cities, just as she loved those foreign watering-places, or any place where she could hit on lots of people and life and bands of music. Her early years had been spent in a remote and stilly province, and to her the change was something magical and splendid. She hated talking of her father's farm and its simplicity; but, late in life, she wasn't so averse. Yet for years she had been rather ashamed, as though confessing to something that wasn't very creditable, and to me and to my sister she was at first incomprehensible, and we, no doubt, were just the same to her. But she was an easy woman to get on with: she went her way and let us two take ours—till Carey-Holt came in and made a difference. . . . I suppose it's a pity—we might have made a pal of her—but she didn't want pals—nor any of us, specially.

My father arrived and went to his dressing-room. He didn't change for dinner. He tidied himself and put on a smoking-jacket and was complete.

He had been writing hard to catch the mail of this particular "mail day." He traded with Central and South America, and the West Indies, and, once a fortnight, he shut himself up and wrote the more important letters—in Spanish, in French, in Portuguese. He was a fine linguist and rather a remarkable man for a city merchant.

I tackled him after dinner.

"Guv'nor," I began—I always called him "Guv'nor," which he didn't quite like, but which he had to put up with. "Do you think you could find room for me in the business?" I continued.

He looked at me dubiously; and then: "Mine?" he asked; "what would you do there?"

"Same as you, I suppose. I want to settle down and make a decent living and get married."

He still looked at me dubiously.

"I've had enough of seeing the world," I pursued, "and I suppose I've got engaged."

"You've got engaged?" he asked.

"Well, not exactly—but I suppose it comes to the same thing; and if I could support a wife, I'd marry her."

"So that's what tamed you?" And, after an interval, "A girl you met on the steamer?"

"A Miss Drummond—a daughter of Drummond's, up in Scotland. They build ships and there are ironworks and coal mines—I believe they're rich."

"But surely a girl like that wouldn't marry you!"

"I don't think she'd object," I answered.

"But her father—her family—"

"Perhaps they wouldn't object. There's nothing serious against me. I haven't robbed anybody, or been in prison, or divorced, or done anything that people make a fuss about."

"You're sure it's Drummond's?" replied my father.

"Quite," said I.

He was very much impressed. He couldn't help being impressed. His values were commercial, and in trade or industry the name stood mountains high—among the very highest! Far, far higher, for instance, than Vignolles Brothers & Co., of Basinghall Street.

"Well, if you're serious, I'll tell you what I will do," he began. "You can have a place at the office. I'll try you for six months, and if you're in earnest, I may be able to find room for you. It's not a bad business, really. You speak a little Spanish—"

"Quite a lot," I interrupted him, "and Arabic, French, German, and some Italian and a little Russian. Perhaps I could learn to write them."

He was rather impressed by that as well, I remember.

"You might be a good deal of use to me," he said. "Come in tomorrow and talk it over. I won't be busy in the morning."

We joined my mother and sister after that and my father read the evening paper, and young Carey-Holt came round and sang to us and was pretty cordial.

My mother got out that awful raspberry syrup of hers and mixed it with water, and there were biscuits and cake and wine and things that came out of the sideboard, and the Guv'nor's very excellent cigars.

I didn't tell my sister anything that evening.

"Where are you staying?" she asked.

"At Green's."

"You *are* grand!" she chaffed me, helping me on with my overcoat.

"Only another night of it, and then the grandeur will be over. Perhaps the Guv'nor is going to give me a job."

"You!" she answered. "He used to say he'd like to have you, but for years he's given you up—talks about selling the business and retiring. And when I get married this house'll be too large—"

"See you tomorrow evening," I replied, and went down the front steps lightly, and so into the street. She returned to Carey-Holt, indoors.

It was a moonlit night and I walked the way back to the hotel; past Lords', past the Canal and Baker Street; and then I was in town again, in the heart of London, with Eve Drummond fast in mind; and her dear face—well, you know what an ass one is, don't you?

At the hotel, a most select affair—it looked as much like a private house as it could do and the servants all pretended I was a duke—at the hotel I found a telegram, and I had to read it twice before I tumbled to it. Eve and her mother had reached their home,

but not before my girl had waltzed into the local post-office and wired, "*Here's to us. Who's like us? Damn few!*"

VII

My father was always an early bird and in his office at nine. Next morning I got there before him and he seemed surprised and rather pleased about it.

"You here?" he said; and evidently he had formed some sort of a notion that I was a roving kind of vagabond with what are called Bohemian tastes and habits, and not very reliable when it came to keeping hours.

We settled down together at once.

"I am willing to give you a trial," he said; "but you'll start at the bottom, the same as I did, and if you're any good you'll be promoted."

I had nothing to say to that.

"And we can't have you living at home—you're not used to an ordinary house. You'll have to find a room somewhere, and then you can come in and go out as you please."

I had nothing to say to that.

"You can have dinner with us every evening if you want to. It's at seven. But we go to bed at ten or shortly after. Perhaps you'll want some money to begin with. I'll give you two pounds a week—I've managed on less."

"I've got some of Aunt Betty's over," I replied; "that'll keep me going the first six months. But I'll want a week's holiday as soon as it's arranged—I want to go up North and see old Drummond."

"Well, you can have that too if you like; but, in future, there will be no privileges. You'll be the same as all the rest of us. There's a desk in the outer office—tell Mr. Niederer to get it ready for you"; and with that I was dismissed and my father settled to the morning's correspondence.

It came out after a while in a basket, and Mr. Niederer, who was a kind of managing clerk and foreign correspondent, sorted it out and handed some of it to Mr. Nairn, the bookkeeper, and some went to Lee, the packing clerk, and now the day's work could begin.

It had been agreed that I was at liberty to hunt for rooms today and remove my belongings from the hotel. I found a bedroom and a little sitting-room in a small house near the family abode, close to a terrace of shops and reasonably cheap. I moved in that same afternoon, had tea in comfort by myself, and afterwards went round to the house for dinner.

It was the same performance as the night before, with me definitely recognised as the Prodigal returned. Young Carey-Holt, I remember, seemed to think I'd been on one long spree, among thieves and harlots and foreigners. It hadn't been quite like that, however.

"You were two years in the Army?" he asked.

"I wanted to know something about horses—it was the easiest way."

The little blighter had never been anywhere, nor seen anything, nor done anything, except run round his Stock Exchange with a notebook and persuade people to buy shares or sell them, and I daresay he had bought and sold a bit on his own account. He had made money over it, apparently, for he rather fancied himself on that score, and the wedding was fixed and not far off.

My mother seemed to think him a fool for giving up his liberty, but, otherwise, a very desirable match. My father accepted him as one accepts the inevitable, and was prepared to make a suitable settlement. Netta was in love with him, I suppose; and he is the father of her children. Women can stand a deal of Carey-Holt on those terms.

I cleared off early that evening, after agreeing to escort my mother to a theater on the next one—she'd got the tickets. And in the new sitting-room, with the lamp burning and the fire alight, I sat for an hour and wrote to Eve.

I'd come up when she liked and see her father, I said, and I dutifully reported what progress I had made with mine. And I daresay I told her that London was a desert and that I missed her—missed her—and felt an absolute orphan and a confounded widower.

All that week I followed the same programme, till the Monday came with Mrs. Drummond's invitation. I went up to Scotland on the Friday.

VIII

EVE's father was a remarkable man; so far the most remarkable I had ever met at close quarters. Perhaps I had come across others just as big, but I had never known them as I was to know him. He just let everything rip till the second Saturday of my visit, but all those eight days he must have been watching us and taking me in; so that when he spoke, as, at last, he did speak, he seemed to know me better than I knew myself. Meanwhile, we had kept to safer topics.

Of him before then, I knew that as a boy he had been put into the Navy, had thrown it up and gone into commerce, industry, and anything that came along. I knew that he was a younger son, that his father had held an ancient title, now passed to a brother, and that, if he had liked, he could have had one of his own. Eve had told me so much.

He seemed to take little notice of me the first eight days. He was away at his ironworks, at his shipyards, at his other concerns that ran along the Clyde. He was deep in his business, and I don't even know that he was at home all the time. Sometimes he was there for dinner and a hand at whist, and sometimes he was not. Everybody did as they pleased in that big house which stood within a rifle-shot of the moors. The town where he had his offices was a short hour's drive away, and once or twice I saw him start off in the morning behind a pair of roans. He was a fine whip, a fine horseman, with his trim figure and easy seat. Eve got her pluck from him, her fearless eyes.

All that week we made a playground of the moors—rode, walked, went picnics; and we danced and play-acted, and went to bed more often late than early. It was a fine, free life they led up here—she, her brothers, her sister, and their friends. The house was full of them,

coming and going—young, delightful, spending somebody else's money. It was a life! I think I reveled in it—while it lasted. Mrs. Drummond was always gracious, but the sister seemed a bit puzzled, and, I suspect, regarded me as something of a freak. For every once in a while I came out with things which, if they didn't exactly make these people's hair curl, at least made them sit up. There was Cairo, for instance, and how I'd run a livery stable there; and my two years as a trooper in the cavalry, and how I'd signed the pledge to get the money to buy myself out; and a cocktail bar I'd served at in the West and the man I beat over the head with a whisky-bottle; and the *Zoe* that got piled up in the Straits when I was working a passage as cook's mate.

Eve didn't care; but most women would have kicked my shins under the table and signaled to me to shut up. But she rather rejoiced in it; and all those gay young men—I've often wondered what they thought. They were respectful, but I suppose they voted me a barbarian—some sort of an outsider, at any rate, like a novelist or an explorer, or one or another of the celebrities that descended on us here and there. For, by Jove, what with Good Friday and Easter, we were a crowd! Politicians and professors and the Meenister fra the Kirk. And old Drummond stood them all, and even me! He didn't say much; he mostly listened, or put in a word that made us talk. And Eve was kindness, jogging me and proud of me, and correcting me where I went wrong; for I wasn't great on etiquette and sometimes tripped up over titles. I liked it best when we took a couple of ponies and went off by ourselves. And then I could tell her more about the office, and the house, and my father and mother, and Netta and young Carey-Holt. They made her laugh; and, candidly, she didn't like them.

"But don't you see I'm going to pull you out of all that," she cried, "and give you a real home and a real family! I've spoken to Father, and he's quite willing. And Mother likes you—said you

were most attentive. I suppose you were, though I hadn't noticed it."

And there was the wind playing through her great rope of hair—she let it down for me once and sat on it and coiled it up again. And here in the open she had a colour and a light in her eyes and a fierce vitality that sometimes made me think of her as a young man rather than as a young woman.

"One could go anywhere with you," I said; and then we planned trips all over the world, in China and Persia and through the Southern Seas. And when we had a son, we would make a great man of him. She never saw herself as the mother of girls—but the boy, I remember. He was to have everything that boys *can* have—the best schools, the best clothes—the best of everything! And she's never had one—only girls.

It was all perfectly and utterly mad. But Young Love is like that. Once she looked up at me abruptly, and "Why didn't you run away with me," she asked, "on that Spanish island? I would have come."

"And then?" I said.

"You would have had me then; we would have belonged to one another; and in this rotten northern world—who knows?"

It was the first time I had ever seen her hesitate.

We sat on a boulder after that, a great rock covered with turf and dead heather, and ate our sandwiches, and she looked out on the moors with questioning eyes.

"I ask so much of life," she said; "I ask so much—I wonder whether I'll ever find it."

She came down out of the clouds and was kind to me—put her arm round my shoulders and her cheek to mine.

"You're like this rock," she said; "that's why I love you. I don't think if the worst came to the worst you'd ever change."

I couldn't follow her; but I seemed to understand her.

"Thanks, kid," I said; and I don't know that I ever have changed. She

has perhaps; but even she. . . . How many people are we? I suppose a dozen.

IX

ON the Easter Saturday, Drummond put his arm through mine.

"You're coming for a walk with me this afternoon," he said; "never mind about Eve—she'll let you off."

And, right enough, as soon as lunch was over and we'd had our coffee and cigarettes, he was ready.

I was glad he'd given me this opportunity. Out on the moors, I could talk with more confidence, with more freedom, than in the house; and even than in the great library where he received people if he and they wanted to be alone together. It was the one room in the place that we youngsters respected.

"By the way," he began, "Eve told me you've gone into your father's business—how do you like it?"

"I don't know that it's a question of liking," I answered; "it's the only way."

"Nobody works for fun, I suppose—at least, that kind of work. I could give you a job up here; but you wouldn't stick it."

"I'd stick anything to make a decent income."

"I suppose you would," he answered; "and when you'd stuck it long enough you'd suddenly wake up."

I was wide-awake now, as we went on together, he talking as he had never talked to me before; most humanly, most kindly—more like an older brother and an equal than the chief of his great enterprises. And the clouds sailed overhead, the wind was keen and stung the blood in us, the turf underfoot was good to walk on, and the wild hills lifted our spirits and carried them afar. The rumour of spring was in that valiant air as we strode forward. This was Eve's home, I thought to myself. No wonder that she carried herself so proudly! And next I turned and listened to her father.

"I like you, Vignolles," he had said; "that's why I'm taking all this trouble.

I've spent a week trying to understand you. Eve I already know. *She* wouldn't stick it"; and when I turned a challenging face to him he went on unruffled:

"She fell in love with a hero," he pursued, "a romantic fellow she met on board a ship and rode with on islands; a careless young devil who'd taken his chances and didn't give a fig for any man. That's right, isn't it? But if you go into business you'll lose all that. She didn't fall in love with your father's managing clerk, or one of mine."

He gave that time to soak in; he gave me time to feel the weight of it; and next:

"I've been to sea myself," he said, "and I've been as hard up as you, Vignolles. I was a younger son of a poor house—blood but no money. I've felt the lure of it—I've known the world and something of its wonders. I chucked all that, just as you propose to do. I chucked it all away when I was nineteen and a bittock. You're past thirty. You're too old to change. I wanted to win my wife, just as you want to win Eve. And I've won her," he continued. "I've given her all that any man could give—she wanted those things, and I don't blame her. Perhaps I wanted them myself. Eve'll want them, too, and more besides. Where are you going to find them?"

"She knows what she's taking on," I answered.

"No man and no woman know what they're taking on till the first year's over," he said abruptly.

"And after that?" I asked.

"They begin to put questions. You'd say, 'By Jove, is it worth it?'; and Eve'd say, 'By Jove, is it worth it?' But you'd both go on and hide the doubt away from one another and even from yourselves. That's what I did, and perhaps I found a different answer. It *was* worth it. But I'm not like you, young Vignolles. And I'm not like Eve. She's had everything; she's never been denied. I've spoiled my women. Perhaps we've spoiled one another. Well, why not!" And he looked at me fiercely,

just as Eve might have done; but his eyes changed of a sudden, and next we were back again whence he had started.

"Yes, you might stick it; but you'd hate it," he resumed. "I've got over that, but you can't. I don't come from the south of France or wherever your people come from. I was born and bred in a hard country, where there isn't much sun. And you've got some streak in your blood—some old Moor or Jew or Arab mystic—I'm right, aren't I?"

It had never occurred to me; and even today there's no evidence—but I suspect he was not far wrong. . . . I remember I stared at him instead of answering; and then he smiled: "Too young to bother, eh, Vignolles—I wish I were!"

He went on very gently after that:

"You could come up to my works tomorrow if you liked—I'd make a place for you. But it's not your line," he added thoughtfully; "you'd be unhappy—in the long run you'd be unhappy. I've said to Eve, 'as a friend or a lover'—we're pretty frank with one another. But, as a husband—you'd find you were caught up in a net—trapped and bound—you'd lose the very things that make you valuable. . . . Most men can stand it; but you never could—the years going from you, and nothing to show for them but money. Neither knowledge nor wisdom nor truth nor beauty—but only money. And the wife you'd married would be the symbol of it all, and you'd get to hate her pride and her finery, for which you'd given your best years. And the children you'd begotten and were spending yourself over would be a burden, and all the kindness in the world wouldn't atone for it. . . . I'm different. I can stand it—so can most men. But you . . . !"

"You'd submit—you'd knuckle under," he ran on; "but, in your heart, you'd hate it. And Eve would ask for all that, and nothing else would satisfy her. It's Nature. It's no good judging it or fighting it. Women are kind; but women are cruel. God made 'em so. And the women of the rich are more cruel than any."

I listened to this man knocking the bottom out of my hopes and my illusions; or trying to—and I wasn't moved. I wasn't moved at all. I said as much.

"What other men have done, I can do," I said. "Haven't I worked and answered 'No!' Haven't I denied myself things and hung on to things—as much as most men—more than most men!"

He faced me then, and held me standing on that windswept moor.

"Yes, but you've always had what you *really* wanted. . . . You've had the sea and the sky and the hills and the desert at noonday and a tree to rest under; and I daresay there were women who took what you could give and asked no more than that; who wept when you left them, and laughed again and hoped anew."

He had drawn a pretty accurate picture.

"But all that's over," I admitted.

"It'll never be over," said he. "If you were younger, perhaps—"; and then he veered. "I'm hardened," he said, "I'm broken to it—it's my life. I can remember. But today, I look out on a landscape, and I think of iron and coal; I look out on the sea, and I think of freights and shipping; I look up to the hills, and I see the quarried stone in them, and the sun and stars are nothing to me but a calendar and the seasons. And where you see the wilderness I see a railroad and traffic returns; and where you see water I see power and wharfage—and that's all there is to it. But you, Vignolles, are different; and you'll never change.

"If you had money you'd spend it—give it away to some other poor devil like yourself. If you had property, it'd be an embarrassment and a tie to you. And you look out on the world, and everywhere you look you find the wealth your heart hungers for—and it isn't gold, my boy, or coal or iron, or freights or power. I suppose the Minister up at the Kirk could find the right word for it. . . . You may not know it," he ran on, "but you will some day—when these things clear and you have suffered to

the limit. A man suffers what he can endure—no more, no less—and just now you're tolerably happy? And you won't believe me—not today, at any rate. In a few years' time, perhaps. Then you'll say, 'The old fool was right.' Today you'll be angry with me. I don't blame you. I'd have been angry if I'd met myself forty years ago. . . . You'll do as you like, in any case," he ended, "and so will Eve. But I want you to promise me one thing. You can write to her and see her as often as you like, but leave out an engagement till the pair of you have got down to facts. I'd offer you money—I'd be glad to start you; but you're not the sort that takes money—and no more is Eve. . . . And you won't bolt with her either, if I am any judge—you'll play the game with us, and especially with her mother. . . . That's settled now, isn't it?"

I would have promised him anything he liked—so much I loved the man. He'd judged me and he'd treated me in the only way I could understand. For, in my heart of hearts, I knew that every word he had said to me was honest.

X

THERE is a reaction that follows upon every loss; when, one by one, the sacred things within you fall before the world's brutality. The maid who offers herself weeps when she has been accepted; the man, hired out, is shocked when his employer robs him—and it isn't the money—it's the loss of something greater—of trust, of faith, of loyalty 'twixt man and man. I didn't know that old Drummond's words had startled me till we reached home.

Taking my bath that evening and changing for dinner in the solitude of my room, my spirits suddenly went flop. Drummond had made me pause and look upon the naked face of things—not on our hopes, but on the things that are.

Downstairs, however, we were full of guests and bustle, and Eve was acting in a burlesque melodrama that had been prepared as a lark for us. I wasn't in

it. They had pressed me to take a part, but I wasn't needed and I'm not an actor. So nobody saw the drop in me, and, after dinner, I was able to clear out. One has these moods. For an hour or two I felt like a wounded animal. I left the house and took the road that led towards the town. It was empty under a night of stars. I tramped it, walking out my pain. By ten o'clock I was in the town and cured.

I remember I took a cigarette out of my case, and found I had no matches.

I stopped the first man in the street and asked him for light. I had to ask him twice before I understood.

"I cannot give you a light," he had said, "but I'll race you a mile for a shilling."

He repeated it with the utmost gravity in the same broad Scots, of which I have given but an inadequate translation.

The genial fellow was three parts drunk and so was everybody else in that Scotch city. On a Saturday night, at this hour, I had never been in one before. But it was fantastic. I went into the best hotel to get some matches; and I seemed to be the only sober person in it. Strange men offered me drink; I was received like a conqueror. Matches, tobacco, whiskey, were all pressed hard upon me. It was something like that Spanish island where half the village had ridden back to the ship with us—only these good people were all filled with liquor instead of with the sun. But they showed a similar enthusiasm, the same warm heart. It was a trifle embarrassing. I escaped into the street again and walked their whiskey off on my way back.

Half a moon was rising above the moors; and I was perfectly and gloriously sober when I reached the house.

"Where have you been?" cried Eve. I told her.

"You've missed the play!"

"I haven't missed anything or anybody," I said; and I described the man in the street, the packed hotel, and how I had evaded my captors.

It made her laugh.

Her father joined us. He was tickled too.

"And they'll all turn up at the Kirk tomorrow, solemn as judges," he commented.

On the Sunday, I remember, Eve and her young friends taught me to ride a bicycle. I had never been on one before.

They led me up to a slope where the road ran downhill, helped me on, and set me rolling. The thing had no brakes worth mentioning and off it went with me; and everybody yelled with rapture and delight. I'd been on a runaway horse before, but this thing beat it. When it had finished, I turned it round and rode it back uphill. I don't think anything I could do or had ever done impressed these people more than that.

On the Monday I left them. My holiday was over, and next day I'd be clerking it in Basinghall Street. Eve drove me to the station, gay as a bird, the morning glory in her hair and eyes. We had gone over much of the ground that I traversed with her father, and there was little else to say on that score.

"No engagement and no bolting"—thus she had summarized the argument; adding in her boyish, direct way, "So that's all right!" And when the train came in and I had said good-bye to her, "We'll be in town next month," she cried, "and we'll do all the theaters. You must take me everywhere." It was one way of looking at life; and, "Well," as old Drummond had said, "Why not!"

XI

You can imagine that London and the office and my own people seemed pretty dull after all that; and probably they were. But nevertheless I was amused in certain directions. My mother began it. She was most feudally impressed.

"You've been staying with Drummond of Drummond's—the Drummond?" she exclaimed. "He's a brother of the Earl of Mull and an Honourable himself, besides having all that money!"

She knew more about it than I did. There was a paper in those days called *Modern Society*: women read it, and yet were ashamed to be seen with it. For it wasn't above a touch of scandal—Victorian scandal—and these Victorian ladies were pretty easily shocked. It had a bright pink cover, which my mother would remove with care and caution, so that none of us should detect her; and then she'd settle down and read about the doings of the bold and great. So she knew a little of Drummond of Drummond's and his elder brother the Earl of Mull, and who they'd married and who they hadn't, if such a question might arise. The Earl, it is true, had been rather lively, and I gathered from Eve that her father on occasion had helped him round one or two awkward corners. But now he was married to an American lady who kept a close watch on him, and today he was rather in the way of being a domestic pet. He purred on the hearth rug and lapped milk out of a saucer. But my mother wasn't so much interested in him. She wanted to hear what we'd had for *dinner* every evening; and as there had been eight or nine of them, I found it rather difficult to remember.

"Hors d'œuvres?" she prompted me.

Yes, there had been hors d'œuvres.

"Caviare?"

Yes, I remembered caviare and anchovies and smoked salmon.

And next she got on to soup and fish and joints and birds and things, and finished up with shaped ice-cream. She was very particular. There were the vegetables. Had they been done with butter or just plain? I did my best for her.

After that we started on the servants.

Was there a *chef*, she wanted to know, and, if so, was he a Frenchman?

I satisfied her on that point.

And how was the table laid?

Upon my word, I hadn't noticed.

"You didn't notice!" she gasped; and it seemed for the moment as though she had sent me North to bring back a report, and, here was I, returned without it!

We did better over the servants. For I remembered footmen, grooms, and girls who made the beds, and old Forbes, the butler, and the lady in the housekeeper's room, and gardeners—I'd tipped everybody in sight and made friends with them; and these Scottish servants were infinitely more human than ours in the South. They took an interest in you; and especially in me, whom they knew somehow had come up in pursuit of Eve.

Young Carey-Holt listened and so did my sister. Carey-Holt, too, was much impressed. He didn't know, of course, what these people could "see" in me—Netta gave him away—in fact, he seemed to fancy that if they asked any of us it ought to have been himself; for, in his own way, he was somebody, wasn't he?

"I'd like to know the two girls," said Netta.

"You probably will," said I.

"Do you think they'd like me?"

"Couldn't help 'emselfs." She was a real good sort before she married that ass Carey-Holt.

And when I'd satisfied everybody and answered all their questions, Carey-Holt said he was going to take up riding and learn it in a school and go for a hack round Hampstead Heath of an early morning. And my mother said: "Drummond of Drummond's, and brother to the Earl of Mull. He might be the making of you. Mind you keep in with him!"

It was all very suburban and strange and queer till I came up against my father.

Curiously enough, he'd escaped the family ambitions. I'd never known him very intimately till then, till those few months during which I worked with him in Basinghall Street. We got on well together after the first shock—I think it was because I stood up to him.

He too had his pride, his self-respect, his notion of things; and it wasn't in any way suburban. Vignolles Brothers and Company had begun in his father's day and had included two of his uncles. Both had died of yellow fever. They

had founded the house at Lima, and then came the branch at Rio, and my father and his brother had removed the whole concern to London and left the two "stores" to the gentleman who had figured as "and Company." After they'd drawn out and transferred their capital—it took them several years—they were City merchants, buying on commission for the parent house and as many new ones as they could trust with goods and credit. My uncle Fred had been in it at first; but he had caught the fever out in Panama when the French were making a mess of the Canal. Not so very long ago. The Canal had been rather a gold-mine to Vignolles Brothers and Company—they still stuck to the old style, from habit. I learned all that over again—I'd heard most of it vaguely—chatting away at luncheon and sometimes after dinner. My father's business now was buying goods and shipping them to his clients overseas. Sometimes they paid in produce and sometimes in bills. I was always quick at the theory of any business, though not so ready with the practice.

My father, as I learned to know him then, was rightly proud of his position. He and his brother had made it, and it was certainly one of honour. In London, in the City that knew him and respected him, he was always a buyer and never a seller; for the produce went to auction and he had no interest in praising it. It was his pride, too, to owe no man a farthing beyond the day, and all his life he had been able to maintain this. He had a horror of debt, of borrowing; and when I spoke of pawnbrokers with the ease born of necessity, my father shuddered. It was sometimes strange to think that I was his only son.

In the City itself, he was always the merchant, at that time something of a caste, almost Brahminical. Without his tall hat, his black coat and waistcoat, he would never have dared venture into Basinghall Street. These were the uniform, the hall-mark of his rank and place. He was a City merchant; and I think he would rather have been that than any Duke; even though *Modern*

Society gave them the go-by and Queen Victoria seldom favoured them with her regard.

XII

Do you know, I was very happy learning that business? In the first place, I was doing it for Eve; and, taking it all in all, the thing *was* full of interest, though some of the detail and drudgery might have been left out.

My father was set upon my starting from the bottom. So I started there and didn't find it too oppressive. I splashed about with a brush and water and copied letters in a book; I endorsed and folded and pigeon-holed the ones that we had answered. I ran about the City with bills of exchange and bills of lading and consular invoices and even with the mail-day post. I learned to know the country from Ludgate Circus to the Tower, every nook and every cranny—tucked-away churches and churchyards, museums, and halls of City Companies, and Georgian and Queen Anne houses in backwaters and blind alleys.

Carter, the office-boy, went with me sometimes, and always the first time. He usually made a picnic of our stroll; ate squashed dates out of a bag or cocoa-nut chips, or cubes of nougat bought off men with barrows—it tasted like paper; and when the strawberries came in he ought to have had a colic. He collected and dealt in foreign postage-stamps pinched off the firm's letters; he owned the half of a pair of roller-skates and performed on the asphalt; he smoked and spat equally, producing cheap cigarettes; and once he tried one of my father's unfinished cigars and had to be helped into his hat and overcoat and sent home early instead of at six p. m., when the business closed. I learned his job—or, at least, the more serious parts of it.

Then there was Lee, the packing-clerk. He had charge of the packing-room downstairs. Most of the stuff we bought went straight from warehouse or factory to the docks, but small parcels always came to Basinghall Street—

China-silk shawls and bandanna handkerchiefs, uniforms for Central American generals, good cutlery and leather articles, or personal commissions. Sometimes, acting under instructions, we swindled these South or Central American Customs by putting false bottoms to the packing-cases. Lee looked after all that; and when each collection was ready he sewed up bales, or soldered the tin linings, or nailed down the lids and stenciled on the markings. At a push any of us would help the carriers and carters who called for the things and backed their horses into that cobbled yard; but it was Lee who tipped them and took receipts and wrote out advice notes. He was a serious young man with ambitions. In his leisure hours he studied Spanish; he was a teetotaler, a politician, and a chapel-goer; and I've no doubt but that today he's a prosperous man. For diversion he courted the house-keeper's daughter—they lived on the top floor, and Lee usually managed to get off and take a cup of tea with them. . . . I learned most of *his* job.

Mr. Nairn, the book-keeper, was the mathematician of the party. He kept all the accounts—day-book, journal, and ledger—in a wonderful handwriting that reminded me of monks and ancient missals. So far he hadn't illuminated his folios; but he might have done it. His black-letter work, his figures and his capitals were gems of art; and when he made a mistake—for even he was human—he fished out a special penknife and performed a surgical operation so delicate that he ought to have been employed in hospitals. Except through a microscope, you couldn't see that there had been an error. His books were beautifully clear; in addition, subtraction, or carrying over, he was invulnerable; and at the end of each month he produced a balance-sheet that told us exactly how we stood.

Apart from these accomplishments, he was a good-looking, youngish man with dark eyes and a long, fox-coloured moustache of which he was justly proud. He twirled it and he twisted it and he had a hand-mirror in his desk

in case it got refractory. He wore very tight trousers, as was the fashion in those days, displaying an elegant pair of legs; and in his large, flat necktie he sported a horse-shoe pin the colour of gold; and he had spats and fancy waistcoats and his pointed shoes were always very highly polished. When my father was out and the coast all clear, Mr. Nairn used to talk about Girls. On such occasions he did not remind me of monks and ancient missals. Girls were his hobby; and, especially, the Girls of Islington, where he resided, the mainstay of a widowed mother. As long as he had his mother to keep, he couldn't marry. So, failing that, he had become an incorrigible hunter. . . . I learned most of his job; and book-keeping, if you give your mind to it, is not so difficult as it appears.

Then there was Mr. Niederer, the managing-clerk and foreign correspondent. He was a German Swiss from Zürich, which accounted for his proficiency in foreign languages. He had studied these at school; he could write business letters in six; and would easily have managed several more had they been needed. I don't know that he could speak most of them or write anything else in most of them; but for business letters and foreign invoices he was invaluable. He was a very tall man, all legs and arms, with a small, thin body, and he reminded me of a praying mantis or a grasshopper. His diversion—for we all had our diversions—was to recite yards of German poetry—Schiller, Goethe, Heine, I could recognize. He'd sit up at his high desk on his high stool, wind his long legs about it, wave his long arms, and, in a deep voice that was most heartrending and unexpected, he would begin. Usually, he would end up on a groan and two lines from Schiller's "Bell":

*"O, dass sie ewig gruenen bliebe
Die schoene Zeit der jungen Liebe!"*

Which means, "O that the beautiful days of Young Love might last forever!"

I gathered that he had been jilted by a lady of his native city; and each time my eyes took in his long, thin legs, his long, thin arms, and narrow body, crowned with a large, round head on a neck as long as a swan's, I wasn't surprised. . . . I learned most of his job.

I leave my father to the end.

On mail-days he sat in his office and wrote; but on most other days, after he'd read and dealt with the morning's correspondence, he would put on his tall hat, change into his black coat, grasp his umbrella, and sally forth to buy. The "repeat" orders were dealt with in the office—one sent them out by post to the agents or the manufacturers; but when original orders came in, the customer relied on my father's judgment and experience. These never failed him; and, if they had done so, the customer would have been the last man to make a fuss about it. For in many ways my father's position seemed to be patriarchal, and most of his clients had a very real affection for him. Dagoes, octoroons, half-castes, Spanish Jews whose ancestry had fled before the Inquisition, real Spaniards or real Portuguese, he moved among them like a friend and very often like a father. He and his had known their parents and their grandparents, had spent long years in the tropical lands whence they were sprung, and he could speak all their languages and write all their languages far better than they could themselves. He had a gift that way, improved by study. I have it myself, but not in like degree.

With the spring, samples of these clients would arrive on almost every mail-boat; and my father took charge of them and led them round the city. At night he brought them home or carried them off to variety shows—they loved the Empire ballets and the Alhambra. Our English theaters they could not understand; but, give them girls in tights, and they were happy. By day they bought and placed their orders in the warehouses, lunched in the City restaurants, and listened to my father's stories. With them he was again "Don Ricardo." His years fell

from him as he sat with them; and he was back again in his early days, when he had sailed the Caribbean, crossed the Isthmus, or worked in the store at Rio. He would tell of earthquakes and niggers, and hurricanes, and a tidal wave that had driven him into the hills; he would sing songs made in a patchwork dialect, picked up in Cuba or in Martinique. From him I caught a glimpse of the real West Indies—quite different from those Islands of the Blest where I had strayed with Eve.

We got on very well together while it lasted. He was astonished at my quickness and my interest. "How did you know that?" he used to say; for, as I have already remarked, the theory of his business was as a child's play to me, who had seen so much of other and more complicated affairs. You gave your customers six months' credit and charged them six per cent. per annum for it; you took a commission of five per cent. upon their purchases; and your manufacturers and agents and warehousemen gave you a private rebate of two and a half or three. So you turned the bulk of your capital over twice a year, and, allowing for bad debts, drew a dividend of about twenty per cent. on it. As my father had several times repeated, it was not a bad business—it was not, by any means, a bad business.

XIII

EVE and her mother and sister and one or two of the brothers did not come up to town "next month," as she had said they would. The house in Portman Square stood empty until June. I often passed it, longing and wondering; but at last Mrs. Drummond was ready and they moved south.

Through April and May there had been an interchange of letters. I wrote her all about my own affairs, which were mostly confined to what I have just told you. There was our home in St. John's Wood; there was the office; and the two little rooms that I lived in close to a terrace of shops. Not very

exciting. And I was still managing with the balance of my Aunt Betty's legacy. There was a good deal of spending in that five hundred pounds—more than I had anticipated; and I suppose, also, it was because I had turned so respectable and nearly always dined at home and often took lunch in the City with my father. I really had no expenses worth mentioning, and my only extravagance was to send Eve a row of dusky gold topazes that matched her hair and a couple of other things which I thought would suit her.

Eve was far more occupied. She had visited friends, gone racing and chasing, played in theatricals, and was now taking up lawn tennis "seriously"; and in the summer she was off to Switzerland to climb—would I come with them?—it would be such fun.

Poor me—poor little me! I had to stick fast to business.

"That old father of yours," she wrote; "if I ever see him I'll wring his neck! Why doesn't he make you a partner?"

I explained to her that nobody had made *him* a partner till he had *earned* that distinction, and that he took the business far more seriously than we did. I told her about his tall hat and black coat and how particular he was, and that, in all probability, he would regard *her* father—a Leviathan of commerce—as of the same order as himself, but entitled, if anything, to ten black coats and ten tall hats at once.

My father, actually, did look upon Drummond in some such super-respectful way. Once or twice he questioned me as to my prospects in that particular direction; and in June, when the Drummonds were really come to town, and one day, after I had mentioned that I was dining with them and going on to the Opera afterwards, he spoke to me seriously and told me what was in his mind.

We had lunched together at the Wool Exchange place off Coleman Street, and we sat a little over our cigars.

"I'll tell you what," he began; "you're shaping well—far, far better than I'd

expected. If you marry Miss Drummond, you can have the business and I'll get out. I'll let you have my money to run it with: I'll charge you eight per cent. for that, but the other ten or eleven will be enough to start on—your mother and I began with less; and I daresay a girl like that'll have money of her own. You'd have two or three thousand a year as a beginning—that isn't so bad, is it? I don't think that Mr. Drummond himself would look upon you as a pauper; and, with more capital, the business might be extended. I think my clients would stick to you—they'd sooner do business with my son than go elsewhere. And I'm growing old," he said. "I've often felt that it was about time for me to retire. I'd thought of selling the business—I've had offers—but now you're here there'll be no need."

It all sounded very simple as he had put it; and, really, in his own peculiar way, my father was simple—perhaps more simple than he had any right to be in a pretty complex world.

I have already given you the image he had probably made of old Drummond—a replica of himself, I fancied, but very, very much enlarged—gigantic, where he himself was merely respectable. Such figures had for him an almost religious significance. For these he had a respect, a deference, that sometimes surprised me. Of the great men in the City of London, he would speak as I had been taught to speak of prophets, priests, and kings—though I don't know that he ever took any of *these* very seriously. Yet a merchant prince, a great banker, would be a manifestation of genius that roused him to the depths.

And of Eve herself, so far but a shadow to him, he stood in something the same kind of awe. She might be of the like species as my sister, but so magnified as to be hardly recognizable; and I daresay he credited her with a due sense of her enormous responsibilities, her amazing opportunities; saw her rather starched and inaccessible, surrounded by her father's dignity, his great position, and all those rich acces-

sories which are the material expression of so much power. Deep within him, I've no doubt but what he was rather moved and shaken, even by the bare idea that a son of his might marry into such a stable. It was this emotion which had made him speak and now review my present and my past more leniently and even with some indulgence and some weakening. For, at that stage, he would not have minded my taking liberties and even absenting myself for hours at a time from Basinghall Street, did such a course harmonize with a more thorough prosecution of my courtship and help me to the winning of a daughter of the house of Drummond.

XIV

I TOOK no liberties, however; indeed, I was rather strong on that point. Even with Eve in town and showering messages and invitations, I had the courage to say "No." It was my intention to play the game with my own father as well as with hers. She said I was an ass to show so much consideration; but there it was. Still, I did manage, one way or another, to see a good deal of the Drummonds, and, incidentally, of a side of London life that I had missed before. It made sad holes in the balance of my five hundred pounds; but it was worth it.

We had a row or two because I wouldn't chuck the office on a week-day—not even for Eton and Harrow, or Henley, or a day's racing at Ascot; and once or twice because I wouldn't sit up more than half the night. I had to be at my work by nine o'clock each morning, and sometimes at one or two I stole away and went to bed. I couldn't "sit out" on balconies till daybreak at people's dances and keep my end up at the office as well. And then there were my clothes. Clothes were a very important matter in her world. They were less so in mine. She showed no desire to make the acquaintance of my people; nor did I press her. Once on a Saturday we passed my mother and sister driving in the Park—they often hired a

carriage to see the show—and Eve was merely curious about them.

"But don't you see I want to get you away from all of that?" she explained. "Why don't you go in for politics or something decent?"

This made me laugh; for, as you may imagine, I was never very attracted by that game.

At the house, Mrs. Drummond smiled her invariable, benignant smile upon us, indulgent, kindly, gracious. There was the sister who regarded me as a curiosity and the brothers who had their own friends and their own time—they seemed able to do what they liked in it, and I imagine old Drummond was glad they stayed away. They wouldn't have been much use to him, in any case, and he had no sentiment on that subject. Him I never saw in London. He put down his money, and stayed up in the North.

With July over, Eve went out to Switzerland to "climb," and it had been agreed that, on her return, something definite might be said about our engagement. My mother had already departed to one of her foreign watering-places, taking my sister with her, and my father and I were left to ourselves in town.

"You'd better come and live at the house," he said; "and it's about time I paid you something for your trouble."

We didn't quarrel over that; and, as the various clerks went on their holidays, a fortnight at a time, we were drawn pretty closely together, I doing all kinds of jobs—Mr. Niederer's and Mr. Nairn's, and even Lec's work down below in the packing-room. It made me a mess, but one of us had to do it.

Eve found me there one day in early September when my father was out. She had just returned, looking brown and bonnie. She was passing through London and she had taken a hansom-cab to Basinghall Street. She wanted to speak to me, very, very seriously.

"All right," said I, and led the way upstairs.

Mr. Niederer, Mr. Nairn, and the boy Carter were in the clerks' office.

She gave them a look of disapproval. "What do they talk about—the price of mutton?" she asked.

"Nothing so common," I answered, with a grin. "Mr. Niederer talks about German poetry—Goethe, Heine, Schiller; Mr. Nairn discusses Girls; and the boy goes on walking-tours and has picnics in the streets—he's rather a good performer on one roller-skate."

"They don't look like it," she said.

We were in the little room between the outer office and my father's room. It contained the desk I now occupied, a cabinet full of pigeon-holes where letters were stored away, and a couple of iron safes in which at six o'clock we locked up the firm's books and bills of exchange or any other valuables.

On my desk was a letter I had written in Spanish.

She paused there after I had told her that that was my place; and, "*Muy Señor mio y amigo*," she read aloud. "What does that mean?"

I told her.

"Dear Sir and friend," I translated it; "and we always end with kissing their hands," I added.

"Do you write that?" she asked.

"Among other things."

In my father's room I gave her the best chair. It was the one that clients used, while he remained seated at his rolltop desk. I took his place, sitting down in my shirt-sleeves, as I was and a trifle grimy.

She looked round the room.

"He's got a nice carpet," she said; and then got up to inspect the pictures that hung upon the walls.

These included two coloured lithographs sent us by the steamship companies and three large faded photographs that had been here since the beginning. There was the big one in three pieces showing Rio harbour, and the two smaller ones with members of my family grouped outside the Lima and the Rio stores.

"Shops?" she said; "I didn't know you were shopkeepers."

I pointed out my father, a beardless young man in a white duck suit, and my

uncle and my grandfather and great-uncles—two of them had held some consular office as well. And there were clerks and coloured people beside them, and the white glare of the house and the strong shadows, all faded; but I could see them in the mind's eye as we stood together.

"Humph," she said, not with any great enthusiasm.

Next she examined the stand that usually held my father's hats and coats and umbrellas. A Panama hat and an alpaca jacket hung from it this morning; for in the summer he always came to the office in a Panama hat which he put on again before leaving, and he did his work in the alpaca jacket and not in his wide black coat.

There were some samples of rice on a table and of Swiss embroideries and Nottingham laces and a couple of steel matchets.

"Is this what you sell?" she asked.

"It's what we buy," I answered; "the people out there sell it."

"My God, what a life!" she cried, and went back to her chair.

XV

IN that old paneled room, the wood-work on its walls disguised with paint, we sat, I at my father's desk and she on her chair, and talked. The room had the faint smell of very old rooms in very old houses; its windows overlooked the courtyard and the windows of neighbouring offices. There was not much sunlight here, nor very much air.

Eve looked a ridiculously fashionable young person, sitting there in a City office, a cigarette stuck in her mouth; and I suppose she was powdered a little and wasn't above displaying a very neat ankle. I wondered what Mr. Niederer thought and Mr. Nairn, who was so strong on Girls.

"I've come up about our engagement," she began; "I've been thinking it over."

I waited for her to continue, though first I rose and closed the door. I didn't shut it quite, but almost. We were more alone now.

"I've tried to stand all this," she pursued, "but I don't think we'd be happy. You don't really like this work, do you?"

"It's not a question of liking," I replied, "is it?"

"And you won't bolt?"

"No, I won't bolt," I answered.

"Father could give you a job."

"It'd be very much like this one."

"So we're cornered," said she; and then quite passionately, "I won't be the wife of anyone like this—I've made up my mind!"

Now that was rather a blow; and there was no answer to it.

"As you like," I said, rising.

"Then it's over," she cried.

"That's for you to say."

"Well, I've said it."

"You don't think I've enjoyed this, exactly—sitting here from nine till six—do you?" I replied.

"Why should you go on?" she answered. "When we first met you were a man," she continued; "now—" and she looked the rest at me. It was quite enough. "Say you're glad," she pursued. "In your heart of hearts you must be glad!"

And, by Jove, I was! For there were two things going on inside me—the desire for her and the desire for my lost freedom.

"I know you are!" she cried. "What's the use of pretending?"

"Well, in some ways," I admitted.

"Then we're both glad! Let's be brave and finish with it," she added. "I couldn't stick it—I would, Fred, if I could!"

She was just a trifle beyond herself; or, shall we call it a trifle hysterical? For, after that, she rose too and faced me; and then she took my head between her hands and kissed me once more and held me to her breast as though her heart would break.

She shook herself free at last, picked up her cigarette, and, after that, she laughed.

"I'm all right now," she cried; and, like the boy she was, "Tuck in your tuppenny!" she yelled, meaning

that I should "make a back" for her.

I did, and, light as a feather, she vaulted over.

"Now you!" she cried, and next it was my turn; and there we were, playing leap-frog round that confounded office, when my father came in and caught us.

His face—his dear old face!

He was in his tall hat, his black coat, and holding his silk umbrella. I was in my shirt-sleeves and a trifle grimy, and Eve had her hat at the back of her head and half a cigarette stuck in the corner of her mouth— But there stood my father.

"Miss Drummond—" I began. But he never believed me.

"What right," he spluttered, "what right have you to bring your girls up here! If you want to see your girls, you see them outside!"

This was too much for Eve.

She glared at him.

But that made him all the worse.

He turned on his heel.

"I'll be back in ten minutes," he cried, "and if she isn't gone by then, I'll fetch the police."

And, with that, he left us.

"By Jove!" cried Eve. It was a different reception from what she had expected. "Is that man your father!"

"Rather!" said I. "And you've done it—put the kibosh on—he'll never believe me. *You* were jumping when he came in—a Miss Drummond—daughter of the Drummond—of Drummond's! Do you think he'd believe that of *you*!"

She put her hat straight, threw her cigarette away, and asked me to take her downstairs to her hansom. It was still waiting in the yard.

"Friends?" she said at the last.

"Of course, Kid," said I, and she drove off and I stood in the archway and watched her. So did my father.

He passed me and went through the yard and into the packing-room.

I followed.

"That was Miss Drummond—" I began.

"You seem to think I'm a damned fool," he answered slowly, and to the

end of his days he never believed me.

Miss Drummond, to him, was always a correct young person with a chaperon. Nothing could ever change that belief and nothing ever did. And Eve, the real Eve, whom he had seen upstairs, flushed, playing leap-frog, her hat at the back of her head, and a cigarette stuck in the corner of her mouth, was just my "girl."

XVI

I DIDN'T feel like rows or any further explanations; at least, not for the present. So I finished what I had to do, and, when I'd cleaned up, I put on my hat and said good-bye to Basinghall Street. I knew it was over, that everything I'd hoped and planned in this direction was finished and done with. I had a premonition, and when I reached home that evening—I had dined by myself in a Soho restaurant—my father settled that question for good and all.

I found him waiting up for me when I came in.

"All this story you've told us about a Miss Drummond and you marrying her is a pack of lies," he began. "I always thought it was from the very first. As though the father of a girl like that would let her marry a rogue like you!"

"You needn't worry your head on that score," I answered. "Good-night, Guv'nor."

I left him standing there and went up to my room. I didn't sleep much all that night—one never does on these occasions.

Next morning I packed my kit and went back to the little bedroom and sitting-room I had occupied in the house close to a terrace of shops. I was done with my family—done with everybody.

The servant girls seemed sorry for me and to know that there had been a row. My father was never very reticent on these occasions. I left a note for my sister—she and my mother were due back in a couple of days—and meanwhile I was free to do as I pleased in

London. It's not a bad place to loaf in for a week. I filled my time quite pleasantly and very much like a foreign tourist, till Netta came round to my rooms in the early half of one morning, looking serious and sisterly and not quite sure.

"What *have* you done?" she asked, as soon as the woman of the house had gone out and left us. "Father's making a mystery of it—something shocking and horrible—and mother's on his side. And Bob"—this was young Carey-Holt—"doesn't seem to think that you've quite played the game."

"As far as I can see, I'm about the only one who *has* played it," I answered dryly; and then I told her everything, from the beginning right down to the end, and finishing with "The Guv'nor won't believe it, but how could you expect him to?"

"It is difficult to believe," she reflected; and then, "Are they like that—fast and false and heartless—girls who are *really* in Society?"

"They've got a different way of looking at life—I suppose that explains it."

"But then she oughtn't to have begun it," answered Netta, seriously.

"Out there—on a ship—it's different from England. That's the whole point of it."

She had no answer to this, and I daresay it was a bit outside her range.

"Oh, I forgot," she said, "this came for you yesterday—it's one of the reasons why I've come round," and she held out a small square package. It was addressed in Eve's large school-boy hand.

I broke the seals and opened it. She had packed it very carefully, and it had come by registered post from Scotland.

There was a note in an envelope:

"I've burned your letters; burn mine," it said; *"and if you like you can keep the photographs. I'm keeping yours. Here are your presents—it's usual to send them back. What fools we are!"*

"Eve."

I thought Netta might care to see that,

so I passed it across. And next I opened the case that held the dark gold topazes which matched her hair. These were intact, but with them she had placed a second little note, like a motto in a Christmas cracker:

"Unlike we are, unlike, O princely Heart!

Unlike our uses and our destinies."

That was all. It struck me then that she was rather overdoing it, and even a bit theatrical. I put the paper aside and handed the case to Netta.

"Do you want these?" I asked.

She looked at them, was even attracted by them; but:

"They're no use to me," she said;

"I'm not that colour."

"Why not take 'em back to the jeweler's and swap them for something else?"

"I'll do that," she said, and off we went together.

We lunched and had a gay afternoon. She was uncommonly decent, and when I took her back to the house:

"It's no good coming in," she said.

"Mother's against you—she'd believe anything, provided father shouted. And he's been shouting. I suppose because he knows he's in the wrong."

I said good-bye to her there, and next time we came together she was Mrs. Carey-Holt and had a baby. These rather changed her. She was a decent kid.

I went down to the bank next day, drew the balance of my five hundred pounds—it was more like five than a

hundred—and then I wandered off to the docks and found a Dane I knew. He had a cargo-boat, the *Perm*, and its next trip was through the Kiel Canal to Russia. This was good enough.

Before I joined him I had a day or two to go, and I remember I looked in at the Zoo one afternoon, and somehow I drifted off and found my friend, the bison.

He was there, mangy as usual, alone, neglected, and something very like me.

I bought a bag of buns and handed them through to him.

He seemed surprised at this attention.

"Good-bye, Bison," I said, "I'm off now—the world hasn't much use for us, has it?" And as he chewed and grunted, "We were too strong, too primitive, too simple," I said "and Eve's father and that fellow on the ship who'd been smashed up were right. Eh, boy? And that's the long and the short of it."

XVII

VIGNOLLES was finished. I remember then that I looked up, expecting more from him, for I hadn't quite realized that he was finished, and when no more came:

"Eve Damer—she's your Eve Drummond?" I asked.

"Yes, she married Damer, who's in politics. She's got what she really wanted, and she'd made him go a pretty long way. I've bumped into them once or twice, and she's always cordial. I'm no use to her. But—women! Yes, that's Eve Damer right enough—I wonder why she keeps it up?"

(The End)



Le Songe D'une Nuit D'Automne

By Paul Tanaquil

I DREAMED that I fell from a tree on a brown seer leaf that the wind was blowing and that I descended into the earth and passed through all manner of hollows and at last came unto a vast garden crossed by a white ribbon of road that ended suddenly before an iron gate. And in the garden were many beautiful flowers; the poppies red as women's lips and their petals curved as though for a kiss, the lilies white as women's hands and their petals spread wide as though proffering gifts; and far above the flowers were naked ash-trees and on them gibbeted were corpses of men.

I asked of the keeper of the gate in the garden what place this might be and he told me the gate was the gate to Hell. And as I asked him where Heaven was, he shook his head, saying that he did not know; many people had inquired of him the same question, but though he had lived many ages he had not heard of any such place save from

the strangers who traveled in the garden.

I asked him who were the gibbeted men and he answered me, saying:

"These are the men to whom gifts were offered, with smiling lips and outstretched arms, but they were dull and fearful to accept them and so they have been punished even in the measure of their foolishness. And the women, for having been hesitant of heart and meek of spirit, have been denied passage through my garden; they are the flowers their bolder sisters pluck, even as Life was once to these a flower to be had for the plucking. Whilst beyond the gate there is music and laughter; fair knights and beautiful ladies follow out the least of their desires, being, for their courage and comeliness, beyond all good and evil. . . ."

In the morning, awakening, I discovered this to be but a dream, yet a tear was in my eye and my heart was full of sadness.



THERE is no trick that a woman will forego to capture a man. There is none either that a man will forego to get rid of a woman.



ONE can tell a horse's age by its teeth. A woman's by her tongue.



The Renunciatory Gesture

By Mabel McElliott

ALL her life she had practised it—the gesture.

It had begun, this "play acting," when she was very, very small indeed. She remembered darting guiltily away from the mirror in her mother's room at the sound of a warning footstep in the hall. Draped in a shawl, her mother's best hat sliding giddily down her shining, freckled little forehead, she had been practising it.

The Renunciatory Gesture.

That, at least, was what she had called it after she grew up.

Then she knew it was only fun to draw her turquoise ring grandly from her finger, strike a haughty attitude (observing herself meantime in the mirror) and say, to an imaginary suitor:

"This is the end . . ." or

"Take it, please," . . . or

"Everything is over between us."

Small as she was, she had greedily sampled the books of romance which their limited library afforded; and this was one of the dramatic bits she had treasured for herself from the frayed pages of some old novel by the Duchess, perhaps; or Laura Jean Libby; or Rosa Nouchette Carey. She really could not say where she had read it first.

At fourteen she still played the game. Time did not seem to dull its charm. Then she had been violently and silently in love with the somber dark-haired boy down the street: the one who wore a tiny red cap when he played baseball, and whistled "Cheyenne, Cheyenne, Hop on My Pony" when he went to the store for his mother.

She used to sit happily in the dark, of nights, watching the light that streamed from the window of his

house. And sometimes, when dreams palled, she would practise the gesture again. She would pretend she was twenty . . . and beautiful.

It was not easy to imagine, the beautiful part, but she managed it somehow. Yes, her freckles somehow miraculously effaced . . . her painfully straight hair a glory of tumbled curls . . . her eyes "strangely sweet and blue as cornflower" (that was another book phrase) . . . she would charm the somber one.

She would be lovely in a frock of pale yellow, and come dancing down a dark old staircase into a room sweet with firelight and flowers. He would be there, at the foot of the stairs. Awed by her beauty, he would gasp out broken phrases of adoration. Would press upon her a ring . . . "with a single glittering stone in it."

She would stand there, tense, for a moment. Would look at him with great, mysterious eyes.

Then she would put it back into his hand with a gesture of ineffable pity.

"Take it please," she would murmur, in tones of incredible sweetness.

"Is there someone else?" the boy would ask, with a note of bitterness in his voice.

She would nod her head slowly in assent. . .

That was as far as she ever got with that particular day dream. When she had got to that point, she would begin all over again—pale yellow frock and all. But sometimes the frock would be mauve. Or pale blue. Or lady'slipper pink. She varied that part of it. And sometimes she would be carrying an armful of flowers, which

she would drop in surprise, as she caught sight of him.

When she was sixteen, the dream changed. There was a violinist who led the orchestra in the stock company theater near her home. He had been there a long time before she noticed him. She had been absorbed in dreams. . .

She had not actually observed him until one memorable afternoon when he had risen in his place in the pit to play a solo. It had been, she remembered, that poignantly sentimental, "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms." (Because it was St. Patrick's Day, probably.)

At any rate, she had been bewitched by the dragging loveliness as the notes dripped from his violin. She had noticed, for the first time, that he was young and astonishingly good-looking; that he had fair hair and a cleft chin and keen blue eyes. That he looked more like a rising young business man than the leader of an unimportant orchestra in an unimportant outlying theatre.

She had been in a highly impressionable state, helped along, probably, by the romantic tenor of the drama the company presented that day; and she had fallen for him with all her heart.

Yes, after that he had been, in her dreams, the Hero. The superman to whom she paid homage. Then she had begun again to practise the gesture upon him.

He would ask her to marry him. . . In gentle, flowery, fervent language, he would attempt to press upon her the boon of his manly devotion.

She would sigh . . . turn her head delicately (like a lily on its stem) and accept. Later the Gesture would come into play . . . this after he had offended in some way—negligence—

or lack of understanding—or something. . .

Then she would put the ring back into his hand, gently . . . but finally—

Yes, all her life she had planned this, this *coup d'etat*.

All her life she had been waiting, subconsciously, for this triumphant moment.

Now it was no good . . . no earthly use.

All her rehearsals had been in vain.

As she stood in the dreary, smoky dawn of an August morning, looking wearily down the dim cañon of the street, she realized that her chance had come, and that somehow she was being cheated of it.

Cheated in a fashion that was wickedly unfair.

She looked with distaste at her husband, sleeping heavily on the untidy davenport bed. At the ugly room. The old-fashioned grate was littered with cigarette ashes. The remnants of their midnight supper, over which they had drearily quarreled, stared at her from the dim table in the kitchenette, beyond.

Yes, she was being cheated of her Moment, even as she had been cheated of life and romance.

She was leaving him. Clearing out for good and all. This was the time to put to use, in a real drama, the gesture she had perfected through years of dreaming.

But she could not. Could not toss her head . . . turn it slowly on her slim throat . . . press into his limp palm the jewels he had given her.

The irony of it struck her as she paused before the streaked mirror to put a final pathetic touch to her cheap hat.

She could not give back her wedding ring.

He had pawned it the night before.



A Moral Woman

By Eleanor O'Malley

I

HILDA McNAIR gave a swift look around and kept on writing. She wanted it to look like a letter because one of them might come at any moment and look over her shoulder, but her attention was so fixed on the group behind her that, try as she would, the words would not come in sensible succession.

To the casual observer, the scene was not that exciting. It was the usual small Florida hotel nearing the end of the season—the long parlor with a hotel desk at one end, a floor of varnished boards that creaked under the grass rugs, walls and ceiling calsomined in pale green, a faint smell of sea and oranges.

Mrs. Freeman, the dumpy little woman with the gray curls who was entertaining the after-dinner group with the story of how "Four years ago when Ed and I was here . . ." had brought down glazed oak leaves from Nebraska this season. These covered the cracks in the mirror above the open fireplace and filled the glass vases that otherwise might be filled with orange-blossoms. The red, green and yellow fish pictures that occurred in odd places on the green walls were the gift of the Dorgans, as a reminder that Mr. Dorgan had once been Fish Commissioner of Illinois. Maud Ogilvie, the girl with the prominent eyes, prominent teeth and prominent Adam's apple, who was dividing her attention between conversation and tatting, had brought down the linen pillow embroidered with the American flag that decorated the mahogany varnished

armchair. Her brother David, the man who looked like Henry Ford and was now laughing "Wah ha-ha!" at Mrs. Freeman's fifteenth repetition of an episode, had contributed the fish rack that stood outside on the lawn in front of the blossoming century plant.

The guests took this pride in The Cedar House because they were good substantial people who came there year after year. Most of them could have afforded Palm Beach, but having at last acquired enough money to retire comfortably from a lifetime of hard work, they were not partial to Palm Beach and its robbers' dens. They liked The Cedar House and its "no frills" atmosphere.

The men began to gather up their things for fishing and after a while the group moved toward the door and began tramping about on the porch outside. David Ogilvie and the other men did not call good-bye to Hilda McNair. It was possible they did not want to disturb her letter-writing.

When the women came in again, giggling around Mrs. Freeman, she waited, tense. But they got the negro porter to take two card-tables out onto the porch and to her eager listening there finally came the sound of Mrs. Freeman's old cracked voice saying: "No trumps!"

She knew then it was nearly all up. They were even playing one table bidding on the dummy rather than ask her to join them.

She folded the letter carefully and, for the benefit of the girl behind the desk who might be watching, put it into an envelope and addressed it. Then she went up to her room.

From force of habit she went to the mirror and examined the fine lines around her eyes anxiously. They weren't any deeper, and anger had made her blue eyes darker and given a faint flush to her pale cheeks. As she stood looking at herself her eyes filled and she dabbed at them with a handkerchief. From a silver-framed photograph her son, a boy of fourteen, looked out at her calmly, and when she met his eyes she picked up the photograph and kissed it fiercely.

"Damn that old Freeman woman and her church bazaars!" she said.

She had almost come to think that her intention to marry David Ogilvie had been entirely an unselfish sacrifice for the sake of her son Pat. David Ogilvie would be such a substantial parent. His solid reputation would still the queries of the other boys concerning Pat's family, and David's money would see Pat safely through prep. school and college.

Perhaps Pat was the main reason, but the intention had been formed on that last ghastly evening in Bradley's. Luck had run against her and she had been left with only a hundred dollars to get home to New York and face the future. Bill Fawcett, the fat, leering satyr who had watched her lose, had decided her. As he had patted her back and reminded her his wife hadn't come down to Palm Beach this season and told her not to worry, Hilda had remembered David. She had met him at The Cedar House on the way down, and she had promised to see him as she came back. The money she had would be just enough to get to The Cedar House and marry David.

It had all worked beautifully up to the last moment, but David was a careful bachelor of fifty and had not quite committed himself. Now, at the last moment, Mrs. Freeman's church bazaar was going to ruin everything.

"That old crow! I'd like to. . . ." She opened the French windows and stepped out onto the veranda.

The bridge players were on the porch directly beneath her, and Maud Ogil-

vie's voice was bidding "Nullo!" It was like her to bid "Nullo"—old-fashioned and idiotic, the triumph of losing every trick.

Hilda sighed and sat down on the railing. . . . The sun was near setting—purple, red and green—behind the dark outline of the palm trees. Florida sunsets were as pretty as any in the Mediterranean. Soon it would get suddenly dark and those women downstairs would scurry in to dinner. The men would come home and smoke pipes and talk fish all the evening. . . . It was a horrible prospect, a lifetime of it with Maud Ogilvie as a sister-in-law, and David's "Wah! ha-ha!" laughter.

But the world had no place for a woman alone, and it would be preferable to widowhood, this life of encounters with people who perpetually suspected a past, with home-loving men who were so ready to take advantage, with head-waiters who held up two fingers inquiringly, and after they had changed to one, led the way to an obscure, undesirable table. Any sort of man would do, any man with money—even David Ogilvie. He must marry her. There was no other way out now, after that last evening at Bradley's. . . . Suddenly, with a remark from Mrs. Freeman, the bridge players below sprang vividly into her consciousness.

"My Ed says it's irreligious. I don't mind not going to church regular, though you notice she goes fast enough when Dave Ogilvie takes her. But not to be willing to supply a booth at the bazaar when we've all worked so hard. . . . The vicar gave her such a distant nod this morning."

"I don't wonder. It's a disgrace the way his children go around looking half starved, and he has to keep on begging all the time, with us wealthier people here half the year every year. I look upon it almost as much my town as Greenville is up North. And if I couldn't spare a hundred dollars for a booth to show my pride in the place and its church I'd . . ."

"It wouldn't cost her much more than

a hundred, that's true. I only wanted her to take the jewelry booth. I don't care so much what the minister's children look like, but that fence around the church is a perfect shame to us. It's got to be done over before I come down next season or I can't hold my head up here again, after all I've said. My land, she might do that little! Ed says he won't give me another cent for charity, and I don't blame 'im. I've given far more work than I could afford on it, even if the money. . . ."

Maud Ogilvie's thin, spiteful voice piped up.

"Well, I'm surprised we ever did make such a fuss over her. We don't know who she is or anything, and she don't seem to have any home town. A woman that won't give to a church charity here when we've all counted on her must have a bad mind, I say. She's got enough to waste on that beauty parlor woman, you notice.

"Yes, that outlandish way she does her hair, and bleaching her skin an' all. Why of *course* it's bleached. I could have a white skin and black, shiny hair myself if I wanted to spend. . . ."

"All I hope, Maud, is that David don't get mixed up with anyone who's not a good woman. I don't say she's downright bad, but Florida's full of widders who come down here. . . ."

"Oh, David always says he's not such a fool as he looks. He'll look before he leaps now, I guess."

Hilda McNair walked across the veranda like a cat, and she closed the French windows with a hard, silent pull. The lines around her eyes were deeper, if she had looked in the mirror again, and her mouth was tight. She walked up and down the room, then sat down on the bed, her hands gripping the covers on each side. She stared at her son's photograph and he stared back, a curious reflection of herself without the satirical disillusionment of the eyes. His eyes were trusting. He trusted her to get him a substantial father and an education.

Suddenly she found herself laughing, and she stopped abruptly.

II

THE porter was shaking her shoulder roughly.

"Palm Beach in ten minutes!" he was saying, with a determined pull at the blanket that shielded her while she dozed in her clothes.

Hilda McNair gave an indistinct murmur and turned over. She would rather the train should run on into the sea than fight the overpowering drowsiness of one o'clock at night. But the porter knew the size of the tip for the blanket and he was determined she should wake sufficiently to know it too.

In a daze as the jolting and scraping of the train slowed down she jammed on a hat and vaguely hoped the coat he was carrying out was hers as she stumbled down the steps. Then everything changed, and still dreamily, she realized it was Palm Beach.

At first, Palm Beach was a sound of trees that rustled like rain and a smell of sea and palms and flowers. She held her face against the breeze to feel its damp coolness. After the lights of the Pullman, she could see nothing, but since there was no heavy hand on her elbow she realized with relief he had not come to meet her, and she sank sleepily into the wheel chair that made a move toward her.

She shut her eyes for a while and they glided softly away into the night, but when the rustling of the palms gave way to a soft lapping she opened them lazily.

Here was the bridge, the faint rumble of the rubber wheels over the boards. Jerry and she had ridden over it like this on their honeymoon, coming from the late train. The water beneath was lighted with phosphorus on the tips of the waves and at the end there was the island with its trees, and lights that flickered and went out. She remembered Jerry McNair had said, "Bet there's fishing here!" and he'd understood when she said "Shhhh!"

"Poinciana?" said the boy.

"No. I'll tell you when we get there." She shut her eyes again. Presently the

rustling came again and the wheels ran over sand.

"To the left, the Fawcett villa."

There was grass on each side, and farther off there must be flowers. It was too late in the season for there to be any life in Palm Beach, and the few lights now were mostly on the little boats on the water. Slowly they came to a stop before a villa the moonlight had colored white, and her anxious glance noted with relief there was still a light in the window.

The boy was looking at her curiously, but his expression changed as she took out her last twenty-dollar bill.

"I want you to come back here in an hour and wait. And have a car ready for me over at West Palm Beach, someone who'll be ready for a fairly long drive."

The boy debated rapidly whether she intended murdering Fawcett or robbing the place, but decided she was only another of Mr. Fawcett's women. Palm Beach contained queer things, and if she'd give him another twenty for getting the car it was no concern of his.

After he left she still stood on the steps, reluctant to go in. Such a beautiful night, and such an ugly errand. Then she laughed and softly rang the bell.

Bill Fawcett opened the door himself, and she was glad to find he had already been drinking heavily. The bottles and glasses stood on the table, and that, too, was convenient.

He put his arms round her, and she had to let him, though his proximity gave her a feeling of almost physical sickness. His flabby face was mottled and his lips looked like overripe tomatoes; if you rubbed them the skin would come off.

"A drink! A drink! My kingdom for one!"

That at least would get him away for a time.

She poured a weak one for herself and a very stiff one for Fawcett.

When he gulped his quickly, she poured another, and she began drink-

ing her own slowly. One would steady her nerves and give her courage.

He made to sit down on a chair and half missed it. Thank heaven, he was farther gone than she'd thought. She ventured another drink, and they kept conversing foolishly about nothing.

". . . An' what's more, I was morally certain you'd be back; 's why I stayed."

"Morally! He's truly rural morally."

"Hee-hee! Nev' you mind. I c'n talk clear 's anyone. Morally! What you know 'bout morals anyhow, you lil' monkey."

The second drink had made her solemn.

"Nothing. What should I know? What should any woman know? As far as that goes, in the sense you mean, I am moral enough. I was true to Jerry while he lived, and I have been since he died. . . . Oh, laugh away, but that's right. You wouldn't laugh if Jerry were alive. What was Jerry? An improvident drunkard. But none of the men who, now he's gone—none would have dared. . . . Oh, what's the use? The only secret is to attach yourself to some man, any old wreck of an imbecile of a man. And you've got to fight other women to do that. . . . Morals! . . . As for being really moral, just and fair and honorable, no woman in her right mind ought to try it."

She stopped suddenly, conscious she had said too much. But Bill Fawcett had slumped in his chair, his eye was glassy and fixed on the table leg. He sensed the silence and the general trend of the conversation.

"'s a great life . . . if you don't weaken," he said.

"Morals! As a matter of fact, right this minute I'm a church worker."

"Hee-hee!"

"'s true." She looked quickly at the time. "And that reminds me I want some money."

He got slightly brighter at the mention of money.

"Reminds you! Any time you forget money. Hee-hee!"

They laughed gaily at that sally,

while Hilda McNair prayed for his usual habit of carrying large bills with him.

"What you want money for? I'll take care of you."

"How do I know? I want some now. A lot."

"You lil' devil. I like your nerve. 'at's what makes me crazy about you. You nervy lil' . . ."

Laughing self-consciously, she drew the wallet from his inside pocket. There was five hundred dollars in it, and she pocketed it giggling. He pulled her down onto his knee and she was trembling, wondering what was coming when he remained silent, still staring at the table leg. At last a sound made her start. She couldn't believe her ears. It would be too good to be true. But she watched his face closely, and noted the limpness of his whole body. Yes, it was true. He was snoring. Her luck had been remarkably good for once.

Very, very gently she raised herself and crept out of the door. The boy was waiting with the wheel chair, and he had a car at the end of the bridge. She knew Bill Fawcett would not follow her even if he woke. He was afraid of his wife. But riding through the forests of palmettos and pines on the narrow, soft road that led back to The Cedar House, it was not fear of the darkness or the sting of the mosquitoes attracted by the headlights that made her keep her face buried in her hands.

III

FORTUNATELY they neared The Cedar House just before it started to get light, and dismissing the car at some distance away, she crept quickly back to the hotel. Her room was on the end and there was no one on the third floor above. There was not a chance that anyone could see her as she climbed the trellis onto the veranda, but halfway up the bark of a dog in the distance made her nearly lose her hold and fall in panic. She crept softly in the French windows and without switching on the light undressed and climbed into bed.

She did not sleep at all, and as soon as people began moving about she got up and dressed again. The Cedar House guests generally went to bed before ten, so at half-past eight, when Hilda McNair got down, everyone had nearly finished breakfast.

Strolling out to the hotel parlor after breakfast, she met Mrs. Freeman's hostile glare with a pleasant smile.

"What on earth makes you so cross, Auntie Freeman?"

Mrs. Freeman's face remained stony, and Maud Ogilvie chimed in.

"Mrs. Freeman isn't cross. She just thinks it's disgraceful you refusing to take the jewelry booth at the bazaar when she's done so much."

"Who said I refused? I don't at all. Someone asked me about the thing very tactlessly just after you'd walloped me at bridge. I'll take the booth if that's what's making everyone miserable."

Faces began changing, and old Mrs. Freeman slowly broke into a smile.

"There's two booths really," she said; "the joolry and the children's clothes."

"Well, I'll take both if you promise not to scowl at me. All right?"

In a few minutes she was the center of an admiring group.

"I knew you couldn't refuse," said Mrs. Dorgan. "The minister's five little children. . . ."

"Of course! It was brutal of me. I'd forgotten how frightfully prolific poor clergymen always are."

She'd tried that to see how well re-established she really was, and the laughter was reassuring; especially as, on the borders of the group, there came a loud "Wah! ha-ha."

She turned her face toward the sound and smiled. Presently as she wandered carelessly out of the door, David Ogilvie came after her. She noted Mrs. Freeman's heavy wink in the distance as they sat together in the porch swing.

"Those wimmen are moody," he was saying. "They nearly had me believin' you wanted to marry me for my money, and you weren't a moral woman. Can you beat it?"

"David!" and a hurt glance.

"Well, anyhow," taking her white, well-manicured hand in his horny paw, "if you're so fond of that clergyman, what do you say to lettin' 'im do the job?"

Romance!

"Do the job?"

"Wouldn't you like to go North as Mrs. Dave Ogilvie? I've got enough to keep you and your kid comfortable. He can stay where he is at school, though. . . . I guess you're pretty sick of bein' alone, ain't you?"

"I—I tell you, David. It's something we mustn't decide in too much of a hurry. Ask me again this evening, and I'll decide."

"Well, let's see. I'm goin' fishin' all day, and I may not get back for dinner. Anyhow I'll meet you here at seven-thirty."

"All right."

"Seven-thirty sharp, remember."

"Yes, David."

And she went up to her room to frame a diplomatic insistence on an ante-nuptial settlement.



History in Two Episodes

By George Walker Clarke

SO once upon a time there came a young man who donned fiery garments and stood in the market place shouting:

"I would be God!"

And the people saw him and marveled at his presumption.

"He would be God!" said a graybeard. "Well, let him, if he so wishes. . . ."

But the young man, seeing that none came to adore him, changed his cry.

"I would be King!" he shouted.

"That," said the graybeard, "is an entirely different matter. . . ."

So he was put in chains and cast into a dungeon, where he died miserably.



Répétition Générale

By H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan

§ 1

MEN of Mark.—"Who's Who in America," for all its bulk, offers a singularly incomplete and unsatisfactory roster of distinguished Americans. The trouble with it, fundamentally, is that it lays too much stress upon two very trivial and dubious marks of distinction: literary activity and public office. All Congressmen are in it, though few of them have ever done anything in life save to get themselves into office and many of them are intellectually on a level with elevator-boys and corner grocers. So are nearly all authors of books—even those who have written nothing save a thin volume of bad *vers libre* or a couple of trashy novels. So are all college professors, though the majority of them are mere vacuums. I find no less than 34 lines devoted to an evangelical divine whose chief distinction seems to be that he is the author of such books as "The Little Grave," "Unspotted From the World," "Somebody Loves You," and "Treasures of Faith in the Lutheran Church." He is a member, it appears, of the Society of Science, Letters and Art of London, a boob-trap frequently exposed and denounced by the American Medical Association. I myself was in "Who's Who in America" at the age of 25, though I had published nothing at that time save a small book of criticism and a privately-printed volume of very bad verse. There is another author in the current issue who announces proudly that he is a member of the Moose.

My suggestion to the editors of this

necessary work is that they omit all such fourth-raters and so get space for more Americans of genuine distinction. If anyone wants to find out anything about the career of a Congressman he may do so quite readily in the "Congressional Directory," to which all the members of the two Houses contribute autobiographies, often extremely eloquent and flattering. As for the minor sort of authors, who in the world is interested in them at all? Or in the more obscure variety of professors, with their endless editions of high-school texts and their interminable essays on Browning, Matthew Arnold and French irregular verbs? I suggest specific candidates in place of these blank cartridges. Who designed the Corona typewriter? I'd like to know something about him; he was a first-rate mechanical engineer. Again, why isn't there anything about Riker, of the Riker drug-stores? I find a Riker who is an obscure Methodist preacher in Ohio, and another who is a designer of electric motor-cars, but there is not a word about the man whose name is on the lips of New Yorkers every day. Yet again, I can find absolutely nothing about Timken, the ball-bearing magnate. Or about the current Delmonico or Sherry. Or about Sumner of the Comstock Society. Bush the terminal man is there, and so is Pillsbury the miller, but where is Weed of the Weed automobile chains? Scores of Broadway actors are listed, but I can't find Arthur Hopkins. David W. Griffith is there, but not his photographer. The list might be lengthened indefinitely. Where are the men who gave us B. V. D.'s, the

night letter, the safety razor, the steam roller, the automobile self-starter, the adding machine? They are all first-rate Americans, thorough and absolute Americans. I nominate them formally for "Who's Who in America."

§ 2

The Thermometer of Man.—A man may, or may not, be as old as he feels, but a far more accurate thermometer of his emotional age or youth is to be had in the women he looks at. The man whose eyes are for women whom youth has deserted confesses automatically to emotional age. He is afraid of the intolerant and derisive challenge of youth; he seeks lack of conflict, coincidence in despair, faded concord—all the things that the reserve and cowardice of emotional age hold out to him as agreeable. The man whose eyes are for youth in women is still eager for the fray. He may be a damned idiot; but he is still emotionally young, and young in the spirit of romance and adventure.

§ 3

Hint to Genealogists.—The so-called science of genealogy, despite the hocus-pocus and downright dishonesty that corrupt it, has a genuine function and value. The function is that of tracing the lineage of extraordinary human beings; the value is that of discovering (if it is discoverable) how such persons come to exist. I have hitherto remarked upon the possible interest and usefulness of an accurate family-tree of the late Jack London. Superficially, he seems to have sprung full-armed from the lowest class of poor whites; actually, I have no doubt, scientific inquiry would show him to have had good blood in him. We know how Johann Sebastian Bach got into the world; the history of his family is almost the history of music. But we know next to nothing about the processes that produced Shakespeare, Wagner, Grant, Samuel Johnson and Maxim Gorki. Who

really believes that Abraham Lincoln was the malarious cracker that he claimed to be?

The trouble with genealogy, as it is practised in America, is that it runs in the other direction. Instead of working out the ancestry of salient individuals, it works out the ancestry of obscure and commonplace individuals. Its typical business is to demonstrate that some gaudy old woman, the president of a noisy *verein* of Daughters of the Revolution, is a direct descendant of Edward the Confessor, or that a man named Bronson (*geb.* Braunstein), having made a fortune in the ice-cream cone business, is the great-great-great-grandson of Jonathan Edwards. Of what human use would such information be, even if it were true? The facts, if generally known, would fill all prudent men with dismay; the spectacle of human degradation would make them mourn.

§ 4

The Slow Dripping of Water.—One of the most irritating habits a man can have is that of repeating in conversation certain pet words or phrases. The man who, during the course of his conversation, repeats some such pet word of his as "proposition" or "fatuous" or "wonderful," or some such pet phrase as "germane to" or "militate against," is less endurable to the average person than the man who has habits ten times worse.

§ 5

Taste in the Theater.—It is the general custom of writers for the public prints to bewail the lot of the American dramatist in that he is compelled to submit his work for final imprimatur to a body of theatrical managers completely devoid of taste and of judgment. It is for this reason, these writers point out, that the quality of American dramatic literature is so tawdry, since the playwrights know full well the sort of men they have

to deal with and write accordingly. This is the sheerest buncombe. With negligible exception, there are scarcely any dramatists writing for the American stage at the present time who have the same measure of taste and judgment possessed by such American theatrical managers as Arthur Hopkins, Winthrop Ames, William Harris, Jr., Gilbert Miller, Harrison Grey Fiske, the Theater Guild board, and the novice Henry Baron, to say nothing of such American actor-managers as Arnold Daly, William Faversham and Arthur Byron.

§ 6

The Pedagogical Curse.—The theory behind popular education is that it serves to discover and develop the low-born man of extraordinary gifts. Assuming that it actually does so, it must nevertheless be obvious that the public enjoyment of these gifts is bought at a frightful price. In order to unearth one man possessing them, popular education makes idiots of ten thousand persons wholly devoid of them. What is always forgotten is that the capacity for knowledge of such human blanks is invariably very low—that it is a practical impossibility to teach them anything beyond reading and writing, and the most elementary arithmetic. Worse, it is absolutely impossible to make much improvement in their congenitally ignoble tastes, and so they devote even the paltry learning that they acquire to degrading uses. If the average American read only the newspapers, as is frequently alleged, it would be bad enough, but the truth is that he reads only the most imbecile *parts* of the newspapers. Nine-tenths of the matter in a daily paper of the better sort is almost as unintelligible to him as the sonata form. The words lie outside his vocabulary; the ideas are beyond the farthest leap of his intellect. It is, indeed, a sober fact that even an editorial in the *New York Times* is incomprehensible to all Americans save a small minority—and not, remember, on the ground that it is

too nonsensical but on the ground that it is too subtle. The same sort of mind that regards Rubinstein's ghastly Melody in F as too "classical" to be agreeable is also stumped by the most transparent English.

Like most other professional writers I get a good many letters from my customers. Complaints, naturally, are more numerous than compliments; it is only indignation that can induce the average man to brave the ardors of pen and ink. Well, the complaint that I hear most often is that my English is unintelligible—that it is too full of "hard" words. I can imagine nothing more absurd. My English is actually almost as bald and simple as the English of a college yell. My sentences are short and plainly constructed; I resolutely cultivate the most direct manner of statement; my vocabulary is deliberately composed of the words of everyday. Nevertheless, a great many of my readers apparently find reading me an uncomfortably severe burden upon their linguistic and intellectual resources. These readers are certainly not below the average in intelligence; on the contrary, they must be a good deal above the average, for they have at least got to the point where they are willing to put out of the safe harbor of the obvious and the respectable, and to brave the seas where more or less strange and horrible ideas rage and roar. Think of what the ordinary newspaper reader would make of my compositions! There is, in fact, no need to think; I have tried them on him. His customary reponse, when, by mountebankish devices, I have forced him to read them—or, at all events, to try to read them—has been to demand resolutely that the guilty newspaper cease printing me, and to threaten to bring the matter to the attention of the *Polizei*. I do not exaggerate in the slightest; I tell the literal truth.

It is such idiots that popular education operates upon in the hope of unearthing an occasional first-rate man. Is that hope ever fulfilled? Despite much testimony to the effect that it is,

I am convinced that it really isn't. First-rate men are never begotten by Knights of Pythias; the notion that they sometimes are is due to an optical delusion. When they appear in obscure and ignoble families it is no more than a proof that only an extremely wise sire knows his own son. Adultery, in brief, is one of nature's devices for keeping the lowest orders of men from sinking to the level of downright simians: sometimes, for a few brief years in youth, their wives and daughters are comely—and now and then the baron drinks more than he ought to. But it is foolish to argue that the gigantic machine of popular education is needed to rescue such hybrids from their environment. The truth is that all the education rammed into the average pupil in the average public school could be acquired by the larva of a first-rate man in no more than six weeks of ordinary application, and that where schools are unknown it actually is so acquired. A bright child, in fact, can learn to read and write without any save the most casual aid a great deal faster than it can learn to read and write in a classroom, where the difficulties of the stupid retard it enormously and it is further burdened by the crazy formulæ invented by pedagogues. And once it can read and write, it is just as well equipped to acquire further knowledge as any of the teachers it will ever encounter in school or college.

I know a good many men of considerable learning—that is, men born with an eagerness to acquire knowledge. One and all, they tell me that they can't recall learning anything in school. All that schoolmasters managed to accomplish with them was to test and determine the amount of knowledge that they had already acquired independently—and not infrequently the determination was made clumsily and inaccurately. In my own nonage I had a great desire to acquire knowledge in certain limited directions, to wit, those of the physical sciences. Before I was ever permitted, by the regulations of the seminary in

which I was penned, to open a chemistry book I had learned a great deal of chemistry by the simple process of reading the texts and then going through the processes described. When, at last, I was introduced to chemistry officially, I found the teaching of it an unmitigated nuisance. Its one aim, in fact, seemed to be to first purge me of what I already knew and then refill me with the same stuff in a formal, doltish, unintelligible form. My experience with physics was even worse. I knew nothing about it when I undertook its study in class, for that was before the days when physics swallowed chemistry. Well, it was taught so abominably that it immediately became incomprehensible to me, and hence extremely distasteful, and to this day I know nothing about it. Worse, it remains unpleasant to me, and so I am shut off from the interesting and useful knowledge that I might otherwise acquire by reading.

One teacher I remember who taught me something: a teacher of mathematics. I had a great dislike for that science, due chiefly to the fact that my father was an ardent amateur mathematician, and tried hard to force his tastes upon me. Finally, my neglect of it brought me to bay; in transferring from one school to another I found that I was hopelessly short in algebra. What was needed, of course, was not an actual knowledge of algebra, but simply the superficial smattering needed to pass an examination. The teacher that I mention, observing my distress, generously offered to fill me with that smattering after school hours. He got a whole year's course into me in exactly ten lessons of half an hour each. Then I passed the examination—and straightway forgot algebra finally and absolutely. Today, very large globules of sweat would collect upon my brow if I essayed to describe the binomial theorem. In fact, I haven't the slightest notion what it is.

Two other teachers I remember—both, it happens, drunken and disrepu-

table men. One taught me to chew tobacco. The other—

But more of this later on.

§ 7

On Self-Deprecation.—One of the most obvious and profitable pieces of hokum in professional writing is a writer's agreeable deprecation of himself, the placing of himself either on a plane with his readers or, more profitably still, on a plane below them. The "holier than thou" note is dangerous: it contributes to unpopularity. Thus the current spectacle of American letters, an industry second only to the cloak and suit business, is an Alphonse-Gaston pantomime in which the elaborate, low bowing of the two parties results in a continuous collision of pates, both auspiciously empty.

§ 8

Lot's Wife's Husband.—The doctrine that woman is generally the pursuer of man is true, but it is also true that in the course of the pursuit man generally runs backward.

§ 9

Literature in Congress.—It would be an interesting enterprise for some laborious candidate for the Ph. D. to attempt a study of the literary references in the debates of Congress. The debates in the House of Commons used to bristle with quotations from the ancient classics; it was the fashion, up to a few years ago, for British statesmen to point their discourse with Greek and Latin. In the House of Representatives there has never been any such literary tradition; the average Congressman of the earliest days, like the average Congressman of today, was an ignoramus. But in the Senate there are usually half a dozen or more educated men, and now and then they startle the galleries and stump the official stenographers by referring to Thucydides, Seneca or Montaigne. On one occasion, during the

late war, the Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge actually delivered himself of half a dozen sentences in French. It was the same debate, if I remember rightly, that was made gaudy by a speech by Senator France, of Maryland, in which some measure before the Senate was subjected to a ruthless analysis in the light of Roman history. France mentioned twenty or thirty Romans whose names were certainly absolutely new to nine Senators out of ten. But he was very careful to translate all his Latin into English. A Senator gabbling Latin on the floor would be sure to arouse the ire of Western and Southern Senators, many of whom have sufficient trouble with English.

I have read the *Congressional Record* for years, and find it extremely interesting, and even instructive. The members of the lower House, of course, are almost unanimously asses, but in the Senate there are sometimes very intelligent debates. I believe, indeed, that fully ten percent. of the Senators are men of respectable culture—certainly a higher percentage than one would find in an assemblage of American college presidents, captains of industry, newspaper editors, corporation lawyers or bishops. The puerile banalities that characterize every debate in the House are seldom heard in the Senate, save from a few specialists in nonsense, chiefly Southerners. Perhaps the most gifted existing professor of that sort of thing is John Sharp Williams, of Mississippi, one of the last of the professional Confederates. Williams knows how to be maudlin, a valuable talent to a Southern statesman. Seldom a week goes by that he does not describe with chautauquan pathos the heroic deeds of the late Confederate Army. But despite all this eloquent praise of dead rebels he is now at least 120 percent. American, and denounces contemporary radicalism with Rotary Club fervor. During the war he contributed to the philosophy of the hour by discovering and announcing that the Germans were not Christians at all, but primitive heathen. This made a powerful im-

pression upon the Baptists, Methodists, United Brethren and Presbyterians of Mississippi.

Some of the ablest Senators, as revealed by the *Record*, are seldom adequately represented by the newspapers. One such is Smoot, the Mormon. When Smoot was first elected to the Senate his Gentile enemies out in Utah tried to have him unseated on the ground that he was a polygamist. I do not remember the evidence adduced. If it demonstrated that Smoot was actually a polygamist, then it is a pity that there are not more such Osmanli-Americans in the Senate. The man is humorless and without graces, and shows absolutely no sign of ever having heard of Johann Sebastian Bach, but he has integrity and he has great ability, and those qualities are certainly not so common that they can be sniffed at. I doubt that there is a man in the Senate who does his work more industriously and competently, or who is regarded with more respect by his colleagues of both parties. Smoot never speaks without having something to say. And what he has to say he puts into clear, pointed English. I'd be delighted to vote for him for President of the United States.

But the best English heard in Congress issues from Senator Reed, of Missouri, the arch-enemy of the Archangel Woodrow. It is truly amazing to hear or read one of his extemporaneous speeches: it is not only beautifully organized, it is also full of verbal graces—and they are not the graces of the *cliché*. Reed seldom, if ever, says what has been said before. He has an extraordinarily acute and resilient mind, and is absolutely at ease on his feet. There is a genuine style in his speeches. Curiously enough, the same capacity for making first-rate English extemporaneously is visible in William Jennings Bryan: he speaks a great deal better than most professional stylists write: if you don't believe it, go study one of his harangues. But Bryan, of course, fails in content. What he says is usually almost childishly idiotic, whereas Reed is extremely plausible and persuasive.

It is a pity that our political system cannot utilize to the full the talents of such a man. He is too intelligent to appeal very forcibly to morons. They prefer the solemn piffle of Dr. Harding—hollow in content and blowsy in form.

The case of Lodge, of Massachusetts, interests me greatly. His high position, I suspect, is largely due to his haughty manner. A man of very slight physique and handicapped by a beard that is somehow grotesque, he yet manages to lord it over his colleagues like a Roman emperor, and nearly everyone in Washington is of the opinion that he is a very learned and sapient man. As I say, I believe that his manner is chiefly responsible for this. Nine men out of ten are immensely impressed by an aloof and superior air; they seldom get up enough courage to challenge it. Lodge is almost the perfect Harvard man of comic tradition: formal, disdainful, bombastic, and quite unable to imagine any culture save that on tap at Cambridge. His actual abilities, I believe, are considerably below his pretensions and reputation. As an historian he is cruelly exposed by his history of the American Revolution—a banal and witless work, well within the talents of any superior college professor. As a critic of letters he is reduced to absurdity by his essay on Daniel Webster in the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, certainly one of the feeblest chapters in that work. As for his gifts in debate, I point to his famous speech against the League of Nations. He prepared this speech with great care and launched it in the Senate with the utmost solemnity. Nevertheless, it was weak in content and labored and ungraceful in style—in brief, a very bad performance. Even John Sharp Williams was able to do execution upon it.

§ 10

Prof. Clayton Lewisohn.—Thus, the talented Prof. Dr. Lewisohn, reviewing the piece of altiloquent claptrap, "Clair de Lune," in *The Nation*, and taking to

task those critics who could see nothing in it:

Perhaps their souls have never been on the edge of dark waters, beauty has never been a wound to them, the murmur of Verlaine's "Clair de Lune" has never sounded in their ears.

Is it possible that the estimable Ludwig is to be the silver-lily burble successor to Prof. Dr. Clayton Hamilton, author of the unforgettable lines:

Whenever right has circumvented might,
Art has sprung alive into the world, with the
music of a million Easter-lilies leaping from
the grave and laughing with a silver singing.

§ 11

A Dangerous Book.—It is odd that, in the prevailing censorship of letters, no one has seen fit to note the corruptive, perverting and immoral nature of the classic "Mother Goose." Surely, even to the most liberal and unprejudiced eye, the book contains much that is damaging to the young. It derides marriage ("Needles and pins, needles and pins, when a man marries, his trouble begins"). It encourages ignorance ("Old Mother Goose when she wanted to wander, would ride through the air on a very fine gander"). It sanctions looseness ("Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town, upstairs and downstairs, in his night-gown"). It encourages theft—to say nothing of illiteracy—"Tom, Tom, the piper's son, stole a pig and away he run"). It misstates the truth ("Uphill and down dale, butter is made in every vale"). It is disrespectful to age and thus encourages bad conduct ("Young lambs to sell! Young lambs to sell! Hear the old man shout and yell!"). It encourages poaching upon others' rights ("Little Tommy Tittlemouse lived in a little house, he caught fishes in other men's ditches"). It is deliberately misleading, and a propagator of false education ("Jack found, one fine morning,

as I have been told, his goose had laid an egg of pure gold"). In this last, it is also obviously anti-Semitic. It encourages practices conducive to ill-health ("Handy, Spandy, Jack-a-Dandy, loves plum cakes and sugar candy"). It encourages criminal acts ("I had a little husband no bigger than a thumb, I put him in a pint-pot, etc."). It condones drunkenness in its approbation of Old King Cole. . .

§ 12

Contribution to a Realistic Æsthetic.

—The dominating purpose of man in the world is to conquer Nature, which is to say, to defeat the plain intent of God. God and man are the eternal antagonists. Man makes progress every time he wins a new victory; if he can hold his gains his progress is real. Poetry is one device for defeating God. Its aim is to escape some of the pains of reality by denying boldly that they exist—by saying, in some form or other, that "all's well with the world." This denial gives some comfort, particularly to the more romantic sort of men; it is a poor substitute for the actual conquest of the harsh facts, but it is nevertheless a substitute. Religion operates in precisely the same way; its primary purpose is to read an intelligible and even laudable motive into the inscrutable assaults of God. Poetry, of course, is a cut higher than religion, logically speaking. It denies the facts, but it denies them more or less speciously and sometimes almost convincingly; it seldom, if ever, has to enounce the thumping and obvious absurdities that religion relies upon. But it is nevertheless a denial of reality, and hence a very deficient agent of progress. Science is far more effective. It does not deny the imbecilities and horrors of Nature; it sets about actually modifying them, and even abolishing them. When science conquers it is usually a conquest that is permanent. We have got rid of wolves and ghosts finally and almost completely; they no longer bother civilized men. In the same way we

have got rid of some of the horrors that religion raised—horrors worse than those it sought to lay. Science is not only effective against Nature; it is also effective against the dangerous remedies formerly employed against Nature.

Religion and the arts are thus only second-rate means of achieving man's chief purpose in the world. They give him a lot of comfort, but they expose him to the dangers which always follow the denial of reality. The man who believes that God is personally interested in him and will save him from harm is in a far more perilous situation than the man who knows better; so, also, with the man who believes that what poetry says is true. The other arts, having less ideational content, are a good deal less menacing. The statements that architecture makes, for example, are not against the plain facts but in accord with the plain facts—for example, that St. Thomas's Church is more beautiful than the Jersey marshes or its own rector. So with music, and, to some extent, with painting, though painting is hampered by its function of merely *representing* Nature—that is, of reproducing Nature without comment, or with very feeble and ineffective comment. Painting will become a genuinely valuable art when it finally abandons representation. The portrait of an ugly woman, even though the artist tries to ameliorate her ugliness a bit, remains almost as horrible as the ugly woman herself. That is to say, the artist simply multiplies and reinforces the horror already concocted by God.

The arts that avoid representation are like science in this: that they actually improve upon Nature, and so add permanently to man's comfort and happiness in the world. The Parthenon is not a mere idle denial of the facts of life, like poetry; it is a positive improvement upon the facts of life; it makes the world appreciably more beautiful than it was as God made it, and so mitigates the horrors of life to man. Music achieves the same thing, and even more effectively. The nine Beethoven symphonies do not deny any palpable fact;

they merely create new facts that are more agreeable than those previously existing. There are no sounds in Nature comparable to the lovely sounds that Beethoven evokes. Here man shows himself definitely the superior of God.

Poetry, of course, also achieves a measure of genuine and permanent beauty. But it can do so only in its character as a form of music. The blank verse of Shakespeare, as music, is as noble a creation as the symphonies of Beethoven. But all poetry, even the best, is corrupted by its logical content. It almost invariably *says* something, and that something is almost always untrue. When man speaks or believes an untruth, he certainly makes no progress with his conquest of Nature. On the contrary, he plainly gives up the battle, at least for the moment. Instead of fighting resolutely and effectively, and so improving his state, he simply buries his head in the sand.

§ 13

American Fiction.—The American popular taste in fiction follows the line of American life. That life is one of action, and the taste in fiction thus runs to plot. In Europe, where life is more leisurely and introspective, the taste is more largely for character study. The American has small palate for character study; his reading eye has no time for it; what he wants is a story on six cylinders, with the hero's character designated merely by a policeman's uniform or a Norfolk jacket, and the heroine's merely by diamonds or lack of them.

§ 14

National Shrines.—Add Marion, O., to the joke-towns. There was a time when the home-towns of Presidents were regarded with veneration: Alexandria, Charlottesville, Springfield. But now they are butts for vaudevillians: Canton, Marion, Oyster Bay. Imagine

a philosopher setting up business in Oyster Bay! Or a new poet dating his dithyrambs from Marion!

§ 15

On Criticism and Drama.—If drama is essentially mimetic, so also—as Professor Gilbert Murray implies—is criticism essentially mimetic in that it is representative of the work criticized. It is conceivable that one may criticize Mr. Ziegfeld's "Follies" in terms of the "Philoctetes" of Theodectes—I myself have been guilty of even more exceptional feats; it is not only conceivable, but of common occurrence, for certain of our academic American critics to criticize the plays of Shaw in terms of Scribe and Sardou, and with a perfectly straight face; but criticism in general is a chameleon that takes on something of the color of the pattern upon which it imposes itself. There is drama in Horace's "Epistola ad Pisones," a criticism of drama. There is the spirit of comedy in Hazlitt's essay "On the Comic Writers of the Last Century." Dryden's "Essay on Dramatic Poesy" is poetry. There is something of the music of Chopin in Huneker's critical essays on Chopin, and some of Mary Garden's spectacular histrionism in his essay on her acting. Walkley, criticizing "L'Enfant Prodiges," uses the pen of Pierrot. Criticism, more than drama with her mirror toward nature, holds the mirror up to the nature of the work it criticizes. Its end is the revivification of the passion of art which has been spent in its behalf, but under the terms laid down by Plato. Its aim is to reconstruct a great work of art on a diminutive scale, that eyes which are not capable of gazing on high may have it within the reach of their vision. Its aim is to play again all the full richness of the artist's emotional organ tones, in so far as is possible, on the cold cerebral xylophone that is criticism's deficient instrument. In the accomplishment of these aims, it is bound by no laws that art is not bound by. There is but one rule: there are no rules. Art laughs at locksmiths.

It has been a favorite diversion of critics since Aristotle's day to argue that drama is drama, whether one reads it from a printed page or sees it enacted in a theater. Great drama, they announce, is great drama whether it ever be acted or not; "it speaks with the same voice in solitude as in crowds"; and "all the more then"—I quote Mr. Spingarn—"will the drama itself 'even apart from representation and actors,' as old Aristotle puts it, speak with its highest power to the imagination fitted to understand and receive it." Upon this point of view much of the academic criticism of drama has been based. But may we not well reply that, for all the fact that Shakespeare would still be the greatest dramatist who ever lived had he never been played in the theater, so, too, would Bach still be the greatest composer who ever lived had his compositions never been played at all? If drama is not meant for actors, may we not also argue that music is not meant for instruments? Are not such expedients less sound criticism than clever evasion of sound criticism: a frolicsome and agreeable straddling of the æsthetic seesaw? There is the printed drama—criticize it. There is the same drama acted—criticize it. Why quibble? Sometimes, as in the case of "Gioconda" and Duse, they are one. Well and good. Sometimes, as in the case of "Chantecler" and Maude Adams, they are not one. Well and good. But where, in either case, the confusion that the critics lay such stress upon? These critics deal not with theories, but with mere words. They take two dozen empty words and adroitly seek therewith to fashion a fecund theory. The result is—words. "Words which," said Ruskin, "if they are not watched, will do deadly work sometimes. There are masked words droning and skulking about us just now . . . (there never were so many, owing to the teaching of catechisms and phrases at school instead of human meanings) . . . there never were creatures of prey so mischievous, never diplomatists so cunning, never poison-

ers so deadly, as these masked words: they are the unjust stewards of men's ideas. . . ."

§ 16

A Political Mystery.—Though it was a political event of first-rate significance, and hence worthy of the most careful study, no specialist in mob psychology has yet offered a satisfactory explanation of the collapse of the late Woodrow—I mean his collapse as a popular messiah. One day his place was on the right hand of God; the next day he was in the gutter. I myself once suggested that his dinner off gold plates with King George was the thing that so dramatically turned the communal stomach against him, and the Hon. Mr. Lansing toys with much the same theory in his book on the Peace Conference. But I now begin to doubt that this was to blame. The boobs were certainly not pleased when they heard of that gaudy feast, but it was not enough, in itself, to account for poor Woodrow's fearful downfall. At another time I suggested that he may have been fetched by an accumulating sense of his utter unreliability. His word, in brief, was worth precisely nothing; the more solemnly he swore and rolled his eyes the more likely it was that he would not actually do what he engaged to do. Whether this failure to keep his promise was due to a congenital defect of character or to the fact that he constantly allowed himself to be flattered into making engagements whose execution was quite beyond human power—this I have never been able to determine. In any case, I begin to doubt that his astounding misdemeanors in that direction had anything to do with the mob's desertion of him. The mob, in fact, is quite anæsthetic to honor. It delights in flamboyant threats and boasts, and seldom stops to inquire whether they are carried out. It dislikes the cautious, realistic man who never promises more than he can perform. Its beau idéal is always a Roosevelt, *i. e.*, a fellow whose pretensions have no possible logical relation

to his acts, or even to his private intentions. If Woodrow broke his promises, then he did only what all other mob-heroes do.

Thus the problem remains unsolved. Our college psychologists, like our college historians, are chiefly stupid fellows, and seldom tackle tasks of any interest. Not one of them has ever made a competent inquiry into the elements of mob psychology under democracy, and yet our whole practical politics is grounded on this psychology, and there are plenty of politicians who have a high instinctive mastery of it. What is it that makes a man popular in the Republic? How are ideas launched and propagated? You will search the books that pour from the psychological laboratories for light upon these questions, and you will search in vain. Laboratory psychology consists almost entirely of dull, half-idiotic investigations of the time it takes a sophomore to fill out a nonsensical questionnaire, or of the effects of smoking two hundred cigarettes upon his perception of color, or of the lascivious content of his boozy dreams. When the first abscissa appeared in a psychology book, psychology dropped to the level of osteopathy. It is now quite out of contact with reality, save as practised by the behaviorists. But even the behaviorists dodge all the really interesting and important problems.

I make a third suggestion and pass on. Perhaps what finished Woodrow was the fact that the mob became alarmed—that his imbecile "idealism" suddenly threatened to expose it to vague and horrendous dangers, *e. g.*, another war. Here we are on safer ground. The one permanent emotion of the inferior man is fear. It accounts for almost everything he does and is. It is at the bottom of most of his politics, and of two-thirds of his patriotism. The easiest way to land him is to scare him. This was well understood by the gladiators who tackled Woodrow head on, and achieved the herculean feat of debamboozling the mob in three months—just as Woodrow himself dragged the mob into the war in

three months. I suspect, as I say, that fear was the agent in both cases. But in order to demonstrate it we must first have a detailed and realistic history of the time. Instead of preparing the history, the college "historians" consecrate themselves, with mole-like diligence, to the incessant rewriting of the press-sheets of the Creel Press Bureau. All the American histories of the war years, so far, have been written by asses and for asses. If there is an exception, I shall be very glad to see it and review it.

§ 17

Culture's Harvest.—Impassioned remark of the Hon. Charles M. Schwab:

We can never forget our cultural debt to France.

What the average American tourist brings back from France, as reported by the Morals Squad of the Customs Service:

a. *In his baggage.*

One hand-painted copy of a nude by Gerôme.

One set of Paul de Kock, hand-tooled and with etchings.

Five boxes of silk stockings for his stenographer.

A gilt clock for his wife.

b. *Concealed on his person.*

One set of photographs illustrating Krafft-Ebing's "Psychopathia Sexualis."

Six small statuettes illustrating various salacious phenomena of anatomy and physiology.

One copy of "The Memoirs of Fanny Hill."

Ten copies of "Only a Boy" for the members of the Rotary Club.

An etching entitled "Milady's Bath."

Six vest-pocket toys of a Rabelaisian nature.

A box of contraband rubber goods.

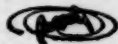


The Colored Hours

By M. L. C. Pickthall

GRAY hours have cities,
Green hours have rhymes
Of hearts grown loving
In old summertimes,
But the white hours have only
A cloud in the sky,
And a star, bright and lonely,
To remember them by.

Gold hours have laughter,
Red hours have song
Drawn from lost fountains
Of beauty and wrong,
But the white hours—Oh, tender
As rose-flakes they lie,
With youth's fallen splendor
To remember them by.



Loneliness

By Paul Tanaquil

EACH of us was lonely. I had lost love and spent my days in idle dreams, wishing I had what I could not possess. You for the moment were alone and at loss, with no man to go beside you.

We made brave vows to cherish each other forever; proudly we grasped firm hands and kissed as lovers do.

But the gray light of dawn, stealing cruelly upon us, found our solitude never more dismal than when you had joined your loneliness with mine. . . .



Srinagar

By Frank Morton

THE dawn steals in as from ineffable heights,
Purple and furtive, sidles down to gray,
And leaps at last in gold.

The casual town,
Far-flung in barbarous contours pitiable
That still enshrine pure beauty, scarcely stirs
Beneath the dawn, until the lightening sky
Glow blue, and caught in sudden blue alive
The lake delicious shivers, pants a little
To find day warm, and is an open eye
That gems a face adorably grotesque
That ripples, bubbles, snuggles into laughter . . .
Ohé! a town to lid a chocolate-box!



A MAN learns his lesson in the heart of one woman and forgets it in the eyes of another.



The Fortunes of Mr. Finn

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

I

MR. FINN did not exist. To all practical purposes, that is. Since life is largely illusion, and since he was important neither in the minds of others nor in his own, he might almost as well never have been born. . . . He began to exist only when a pretty lady with a white hand and a soft, persuasive voice hinted that he did.

"This is Mr. Finn," she said so plausibly that people stopped what they were saying to take account of him. "We shall see a great deal of Mr. Finn in the future. Hitherto he has always been occupied taking care of his mother."

Poor Mr. Finn, unintentionally she had given him away! That was both his indictment and his apologia—he had taken care of his mother! Miss Curwood's tea-assembly turned its aggregate eye upon Mr. Finn. There was a legend along Cape Street of such a person and such a mother, but it was a dull legend which none cared to investigate. And now, although their hostess would convince her guests of his authenticity, the fact that Mr. Finn himself seemed uncertain made them doubt. One must believe in oneself to inspire the belief of others. Besides, an effeminate man is always adjudged second-rate.

It wasn't so much that Mr. Finn looked insignificant. He was neither small nor wizened. He was, in point of fact, a rather large man, rather pale from having lived his life indoors. His blond hair had receded from shyness, leaving his forehead unprotected to the public gaze; his blue eye was a trifle

faded, with a wistful translucence, and his mouth, fine-lipped, devoid of masculine harshness, seemed always inclined to smile faintly. He had the delicately deferring manner of a woman. He had the large patience of one whose ears have heard only complaints and whose mouth had shaped only reassurances; it puckered softly to words of pity.

As Miss Curwood had stated, he had taken care of his mother. For twenty years he had detained her dying and sacrificed his manhood with perfect innocence. And the saddest part of it was that you could not feel sorry for him without also laughing at his plight.

It had begun when he was twenty, a pink and gold specimen of a lad, the prize product of a fussy, sentimental woman and a strong man victimized by her tyranny of tears. On his death-bed his father had said to the boy, "I'm going, thank God." And he had added, paradoxically, "If you consider you have a duty, disregard it!"

Unfortunately it did not occur to the down-thatched youth that the sick man was in his right mind, else those words might have "given greatly to think." So no sooner was his father dead in peace than Archie scratched around, found the duty aforesaid, and set to with a will.

His worst break was when he let his mother know there was electricity in his fingers and that he had a sort of genius with the hot-water bottle. Also that his tender mind was a warehouse where she could store the luggage of her grievances and make certain nothing would be lost. Trunk number one contained all early disappointments fit to brood upon;

trunk number two the bitter commentaries on her husband's life; trunk number three was of wardrobe size and outfitted with vari-colored ailments in elaborate assortment. Besides which there was, so to speak, a great deal of hand baggage, full of uncomfortable complaints in miniature. Archie was custodian of them all and could move them about in his sleep and find any article she desired.

They lived on a quaint street of an aristocratic old town, a street leading to a point of Long Island Sound. There a rakish lighthouse reared its shaft and winked all night at ships that passed. The smell of salt, of clams and mud-flats swept back and compromised the fragrance of flowers in shabby gardens. Although the Finns' was a sort of shut-eye house, it had a garden in the rear, one that Mr. Finn tended with his own hands. He would trip out of the back door, wearing an apron from frying doughnuts and with a guilty, furtive pleasure dig round the roots of his perennials, sniff the air and wonder about himself and his reality. Then his mother would call from upstairs.

"Archie! Archie!" with a rising, bird-inflection, a smug, triumphant playfulness very terrible, and Mr. Finn would wipe his hands, tremble a little and dash in.

"Is it the lavender wrapper with the gray parrots you want," he would ask lispingly, "or the red print Canton?"

Not that he was interested in dress materials, but that all her accessories were monstrously magnified in his life.

"The lavender wrapper, Archie," she would simper, and watch him with a doting, carnivorous affection, something in the manner of a cannibal regarding his next meal. He was hers to consume with a finicking pleasure, a lingering appetite.

All day he scuffed about in a pair of Morocco bed-room slippers, performing humiliating tasks with the docility of a born damn fool. The yellow hair that blessed the back of his head was oiled and stayed down like good, obedient hair; he wore a black alpaca house

jacket that did not match his trousers and his pockets were full of dust rags and medicine vials instead of cigarettes and matches. Likewise, consistently, his head was full of cooking recipes and schemes to please his mother. She had taught him to talk with a soft pedal so that his voice was, in truth, light enough to have passed for a woman's, his trailing intonation inspired men to humorous sallies.

But you are not to suppose that Mr. Finn was altogether deprived of masculine distractions. To the contrary! From his father he had inherited a collection of old firearms and the influence of these, carefully preserved and tended all these years, had been to make of Mr. Finn a marksman. First he had experimented with blunderbus and other early firearms, but had lost interest in the crude mechanics of a by-gone day and turned his attention to modern weapons. When he had accomplished all the innumerable errands that his mother's brain could devise she would give him leave to indulge his hobby. Then he would sleuth his way into the wood where he had a target set up in a secret place. Unknown to his neighbors he came to excel in trick shooting. Occasionally he shot some game for his mother which she relished exceedingly.

So the years had passed in busy futility and at last Mrs. Finn had made good her ancient threat of dying. Her exacting, cajoling presence was suddenly withdrawn and one day, the funeral being accomplished, Mr. Finn found himself the arbiter of his own destiny.

He was at first crushed, then he became timid like a young girl. What should he do now? His mother's going like that left him with the old sense of guilt. It was as though he knew she never meant him to be free and even now feared her displeasure.

For days he pensively folded away her things, the purple kimona with the parrots, the cashmere shawl she had worn in bed, her blankets and night dresses. He moved about numbly in the musty house among the musty treasures of his family tree, peeping out

from behind the drawn curtains into the bright, sun-strewn street and knowing, with a little catch, that there was nothing in the world to prevent him from perambulating there.

Inherently, he was opposed to drawn curtains, to many mandates of his mother's régime, but courage only came in minute particles. It would have been interesting to mark the progress of his emancipation from the day when he tore the barriers down and ushered the sunlight in. The old mahogany swam like wine into reds and browns, the crystals of the candelabra obeyed with a thousand prismatic colors and Mr. Finn caught his breath with sinful delight.

Next he took to walking abroad in open daylight; he grew quite careless about his housekeeping. And finally it occurred to him that he could give up his arduous affinity for pots and pans. He was reminded of his bank account, of the unwieldy, untouched funds which his mother had been too ailing and too stingy to enjoy. When his housekeeper was installed there was practically no avenue of interest that he could not have explored. Not that he rose so dizzily. It was the height of his ambition to be a medium-sized frog in this tiny puddle, to move about through the shallow water with a sure locomotion of his legs, to take the sun as his just due, to croak as loudly as the other frogs at the proper time of day.

And as the church was the social center in Cape Town he went to church. He dressed himself imitatively in cut-away and top hat and grasped a walking stick firmly in his hand. And he put a hundred-dollar bill on the contribution plate. That bill helped the clergyman and the congregation to remember him and the mother for whom he had shot game. But Mr. Finn was one of those luckless mortals who defeat their own ends continuously. The more he desired to live, the more panic-stricken he became at any attempt to show him off. Whenever the exploiters set him on his feet and handed him his hat and stick he would immediately collapse on the

floor with a sickly smile and a convulsive kick.

And so though he eventually came to be seen about, it was in a negative fashion. It was as though he said, "Don't, I pray, notice me. I am really no one of any account, no one at all." One attribute he possessed of value to women. He was a born listener, a born sympathizer; he had been trained to that profession. Women would lean their elbows on his soul and when they had refreshed themselves walk away and forget him.

Once, on a Sunday afternoon with a call-paying contingent the others, forgetting him entirely, had entered a house and shut the door in his face. And Mr. Finn, as disappointed as a child, yet too proud to ring the bell again, had descended the steps and gone off.

II

No one required him for other than a sponge to sop up tears, save the lady with the white hand. She was a Miss Lydia Curwood, an aristocrat stepped from a painting by Sargent.

Mr. Finn thought her a very beautiful aristocrat; he felt much in awe of her, yet a little compassionate at the same time. Because she was waving a slim hand to girlhood and because she manifestly did not want to grow old, he sensed sadness in her proud restraint, a fine graciousness in every slow, considered word she said. Her brown hair, touched by early frost, waved like strains of music. It showed her forehead and her ears and both were charming. About her eyes were faint and touching shadows; her mouth had a sweetness as though it remembered something.

It was her mouth which had haunted Mr. Finn from the first, though he did not recognize his symptoms. He had dealt only with his mother's lumbago and the irritability of her Bright's disease; he had always been too busy to indulge his own disorders, even of a physical nature. And he did not dream what had befallen him when he took to

mooning about the breakwater on the point, to missing at target practice and to lying for hours sleepless in the middle of the night.

Perhaps because she was naturally kind or because she was impressed by this man's extraordinary talent for sympathy, Miss Curwood had taken up inviting him to her home. It was a quiet Colonial house, duly pillared by old people, where Miss Curwood lived with considerable restraint. Her little tea-parties were almost her sole expression. As she passed the tissue cups and conversed in her sensitive, considered way, Mr. Finn thought he could detect a naked suffering in her eyes, at variance with her comfortable surroundings.

It sent him scurrying each time like a squirrel in a cage; he would go faster and faster in any direction yet never escape himself! He experienced the first manly emotions of longing and soreness and they were not second-rate emotions. They were bigger than Mr. Finn, bigger than anything he had ever been or planned to be. Again he remembered his mother's money and spent it with insane prodigality on things calculated to please her. But she only rebuked him gently so that he perspired and felt himself a fool. After that he came with a great tub of mignonette under his arm and looked like an overgrown hobgoblin that had robbed a garden. And this time she did not rebuke him.

"How precious of you!" she exclaimed with hands uplifted prettily and he understood that she was pleased and blushed through all gradations of red. "You are very good to me, Mr. Finn!"

"Archie," suggested Mr. Finn, emboldened.

"Archie?" With an indulgent lift of the brow. "I think I've never heard. You may call me Lydia."

"Lydia," repeated Mr. Finn in a high, cracked voice, but a voice that loved the word. "I call you something else in my thoughts. I—," and with trite sentimentality, "I call you 'my lady!'"

They were in Miss Curwood's yellow and gray drawing room and they had

dropped down upon a Chippendale sofa with the tub of mignonette at their feet. He hung, agonizing, on her reaction.

At first it seemed she was going to laugh; her eyes made ready, that soft, remembering mouth quirked deliciously. Then, unexpectedly, as though a warm wind had turned cold, her face went bleak, a full, divine tear gathered in her eye. She dropped her hand into Mr. Finn's, and it was a very easy hand to hold, plastic and conforming. It rid him of his awkwardness, humanized him.

"I love you," he said simply those great words. (That, out of the domestic bastille, he should have risen to this!) "I love you."

And as though he could neither add to nor subtract from the statement he repeated with complex rapture:

"It is you I love."

Heavens, what words they were to say! He heard a complete orchestration of the theme, delicate innuendoes of violin, the full confirmation of the cello. For a time he was completely engrossed in this æsthetic delight. Then it occurred to him to wonder about her. . . .

He looked. He saw her lower lip caught in her teeth, her head with its proud uplift of hair, drooping. And he knew, just as he had always known, that she would sink her sorrows in him as in a well. God had fashioned him for such a fate. He waited with the patience of the ages.

"Dear Mr. Finn," she faltered, "dear Archie."

"Yes," said Mr. Finn inflectionlessly. "Tell me."

"Tell *you?*" she laughed and her laughter was a knife that turned a jagged wound. It had nothing to do with refinements. It set him trembling.

"Don't," he protested cringing, because he was afraid she laughed at him. "I'm no one, I know—I'm not like other men." But she seemed scarcely to hear him.

"I've never told anyone," she reeled on; "never anyone all these years."

"Oh," said Mr. Finn in comic relief

and wiped his forehead. "You are going to tell me then."

She strained about to look at him, his pale patience, his overgrown innocence, self-abnegation.

"You?" she shrilled again. "Why you or why not you? Perhaps I've reached a danger point now. It's not that I rebel to have it different. It's that I've ceased to rebel. Dear God, I've ceased to rebel."

"No, no," protested Mr. Finn soothingly, "you must never do that," and he went on patting her hand and saying mechanically, "never do that—"

She looked at him widely.

"I'll tell you if you like," she offered with a calm that reminded Mr. Finn of the passive way the water lipped the rocks before a storm broke on the reef. He nodded.

"You say you are not like other men," began Lydia Curwood. "Then let me tell you that I'm not like other women. I have missed my entire destiny, Archie Finn, and nothing, no one can give it back to me."

Mr. Finn was wise as a confidant; he did not interrupt nor contradict. He only waited with his colossal patience.

"I suppose," mused Miss Curwood, fingering the soft stuff of her gown, "that you have thought me a comfortable spinster in this old house, living with my old people who love me. I am told that I radiate serenity. You wouldn't believe it possible that I have a sorrow?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Finn with unexpected insight, "I should think it inevitable."

She laughed scornfully.

"My New England training has sustained me well. Repression is the strongest instinct that my ancestors bequeathed me. If one is repressed one can never seem *declassée*."

Mr. Finn caught his breath in horror.

"You?" he gasped with a mingling of ridicule and reverence.

"I," she answered solemnly. "Oh, yes, I know what a pale, pure blue is this blood in my veins." She called upon

him to witness, and they both stared literally at her slender relaxed hand that lay, palm-uppermost, in his. "If it wasn't quite so blue I shouldn't mind so much. I could run out into the world and be a normally desperate woman, patching up my life in any one of a dozen ways."

Her glance turned moodily about the room and Mr. Finn's followed. From the threshold of their frames her ancestors looked forth, and theirs were the eyes of strong principles. Everywhere was the blurry blue of old China, the liquid gleam of polished brass, the symmetry of Heppelwhite and Chippendale. Every inch of the room bespoke the pure strain of Anglo-Saxon blood. The room was its own argument. She made a gesture as though to say "You see."

"It's hardly fair," she continued fiercely, "that New Englanders with their inhibitions should have the capacity for loving. In my case it amounted to genius. I say 'amounted' because I seem almost to have stopped. That is my greatest bitterness. And after fifteen years."

Mr. Finn was cut up and he blew his nose.

"Isn't it—isn't it ridiculous?" She clutched his hand hard.

"No," said Mr. Finn at last, "it's very beautiful."

His voice was less lisping, more mellow. Its tenderness relaxed her tension. Her eyes swam softly again.

"I've waited long to be told that, Archie Finn." Beneath the thin lace of her bosom there was a convulsive sigh, terribly repressed. "But whether you condone or condemn my conduct, be sincere. Oh, be sincere, I beg of you. Because I've—never—told—before—"

His eyes vowed integrity.

"For years I was a poacher, Archie Finn. I trespassed on another woman's preserve. I thought at first that she was indifferent to him. That was the impression he gave. By the time I realized she would fight fiercely to protect her claim it was too late. You can't unlove—"

"No," pointed out Mr. Finn with me-

ticulous gentleness, "but you can make love a sacrifice."

"Oh, yes," she agreed haggardly. "I see that now. It is easier when one is old. Even then I did try. We had innumerable partings, but each time after a long separation the sense of desolation was so devastating—" She broke off, and as he watched her quiet her pain he wondered why her strength had deserted her in crisis.

"I let the twenties go by," she told him, "and I never complained at the punishment I deserved. I told myself, 'If I am silent through suffering, perhaps God will forgive my—my—'"

She shivered fastidiously.

"Sin is a fantastic word, don't you think?"

"Always, as applied to oneself."

"But I do apply it," she declared, making her mouth straight. "Every day. You see, in one sense I haven't shirked. And I've seen other women getting the vital dividends of life, being casual about it, and always I've been so terribly aware of what I was missing."

Mr. Finn's hand over hers grew veinous. Her head fell forward.

"The humiliating part of it is that this man I've loved so faithfully, so long, has been free for four years. His wife is dead."

"You are telling me that? Then why, in God's name, doesn't he marry you? Don't you still love one another?"

"I don't know," she whispered unhappily. "He asks me to wait—"

"Oh," came from Mr. Finn omnisciently.

Since he had burst his cocoon in Cape Town the smooth retina of his brain had registered many impressions concerning men and life.

"During the twenties," she ruminated dully, "I wanted ideal conditions for my love. After thirty I ceased to think about that. I thought instead of the background that I had been denied, of the ghastly travesty of my spinsterhood at home. Now I think scarcely at all of the man I loved, but sometimes the sound of children's voices seems to fill his old house—such a happy sound—and

their feet go scampering up and down the stairs. And then I am normal and occupied, not bereft and idle. I believe it is that which I mind the most, Mr. Finn, about the little children I might have had."

Suddenly, as though the last thread of control had snapped, she broke across his knee and sobbed awfully. And there sat Mr. Finn, loving her and holding her helplessly, seeing the figure on the carpet dance into bizarre pattern through his honest tears.

Then, had there been an observer, he might have made interesting notes. There was a change in Mr. Finn, a co-ordination of his forces. His back straightened, his hand, so shy on her shoulders, lumped big with blood, his usually passive face was brutalized. Lydia, could she have seen him, would not have recognized her passive friend.

"Stop crying," he bade her shortly, having absorbed her sorrow into himself, and, when she lifted her tear-drowned face, "Who is this man that denies you what you deserve, and do you still love him?"

"I can't tell you who he is," she caught her breath forlornly, "and I don't know whether I love him or not. Only, my pride—all these years—and the killing monotony of growing old with old people—"

"To be sure," growled Mr. Finn. "Infamous, infamous! Does he live in Cape Town?"

She looked startled.

"Oh, no."

"Then he does," decided Mr. Finn astutely. Aloud he said:

"You must leave it all to me," just as he had been in the habit of reassuring his mother.

"To you?" She sat erect while he tenderly wiped her eyes with his great white handkerchief which smelled of lavender. It was a new thought that Archie Finn might interfere; whatever he did he would do very badly, very gauchely, and immediately she regretted her confidence. An annoyance, a slow shame rose within her.

"Mr. Finn," she burst out urgently,

cruel now that she was comforted, "you must promise me to dismiss this absolutely."

His eyes reflected the confusion of his brain; all people were hard to grasp, but women were harder than men, he thought. You could see that.

"So you wish me to forget?" The question had no real force behind it. He merely wished to gain time to think.

"More than you can imagine," insisted Lydia with soft vehemence, and she clasped his hand for emphasis and appeal. "I don't know why I whined like that. . . ."

He breathed heavily.

"Then I promise to forget," he said; but when he rose his hands were still full of dark, choleric blood. He was conscious of pain, dull and baffled, because he would not yield himself as its territory.

— Lydia, too, rose. She was tall, but Mr. Finn was taller. He made certain of that by standing very close. The fact afforded him a childish satisfaction.

"Good-bye," he said softly, yet with a certain severity. "Don't cry, don't cry any more!"

III

It was many weeks before she saw him again. Mr. Finn was spending his time with men, and this by deliberate choice. He cultivated men assiduously and successfully and by two means: his cellar full of old wine and his interesting collection of weapons which was coming to enjoy fame. That he was a bully good shot became propaganda; that, added to this, he was a connoisseur of liquors caused him to be esteemed as "not such a bad fellow, after all."

But despite this growing popularity of his, there was one fly that Mr. Finn found difficult to coax to his web.

Mr. Randolph Morton, you see, was an insect famed for independence. Rarely did he alight, but as he drew arbitrary patterns on the air he had sometimes remarked Mr. Finn, the obscure spider, and buzzed with ridicule. Morton was handsome and always made

capital of his looks: he was well set-up, well fed, well groomed! At forty the ruddy complexion was fresher than ever, the buccaneering eye was as bold, the square-edged teeth as white and strong. He "fluttered pulses" when he said "Good morning." "He glittered when he walked." He was a widower and rich according to the standard of even larger cities than Cape Town.

Mr. Finn had new clothes and was also "well fixed," but he would never glitter, and he was wholly negligible beside a diamond of so many facets. Whenever and wherever they had met Morton had always called him "Mr. Fish" with gay obstinacy. And Morton would not come to look at the firearms and taste the champagne, though he had been strongly recommended to do so by his friends.

"Thanks," he would say to them with a harsh laugh. "I have 'fire water' of my own, and I'm not interested in old weapons, nor antique persons like Archie Finn!"

Nevertheless, he was aware of the tenacity with which Mr. Finn kept after him, and the reason for such attention gave his brains some exercise. If he chanced into a shop where Mr. Finn was also making a purchase, he was immediately aware of elaborate overtures—nagging or wistful overtures. Mornings on his way to business—he was president of the local bank—more often than not Archie would be opening his gate opportunely and would strike pace with him. Whenever an opportunity presented, Finn was at his elbow, his pale blue eyes marred by secret speculation, or hope, or a faintly veiled antagonism.

At first flash of recognition, Archie's hatred of the materialistic Morton had been vast. He could not see him without inner volcanic disturbances. Once he had beheld Morton turning in at the Curwood's drive and almost spluttered in his rage. The impudence of the man, to seat himself upon her friendship, to drink the hospitality of the home he had dishonored!

This phase of passionate animosity was a tricky thing, however; Mr. Finn

was given to see other sides of the man's character, and, though it had small defects, it was not a small character, as men count character. It even had healthy radiations.

For instance, he endeared himself to the most humble people, manifesting qualities which they recognized as genuine. In his days of recreation he went fishing with the old salts out beyond Block Island; he could be as coarse as they, also as ingenious and brave. And he had affinity for many other sorts of primitive people. . . . In a community where the bank president was supposed to occupy a dais he was the most democratic of squires. What Archie Finn was to discover was that Morton, for all his glitter, was essentially a man's man. He had no fine inhibitions of delicacy; he would be ruthless in regard to women, yet women would always be affected by him.

Finn's attitude toward him was no doubt something like this:

"Here is a man who kicks dogs. I'd like to be his dog and show him he couldn't kick me."

And, despising himself for his complex feelings, he became more bent upon punishment.

Morton was greatly puzzled and embarrassed by this constant attention of Archie Finn's, till one day he, in turn, saw Finn turning in at Miss Curwood's gate. He could not know that the object of the visit was to strengthen a wavering purpose, but he could grasp that any call paid by Mr. Finn upon a person of the opposite sex was significant. And after that he became more malleable.

He waited now with a tolerant whimsicality for the steps that were behind him. And one evening in the interlude of summer he walked docilely into the web which Mr. Finn had spun.

IV

FINN greeted him with the cordiality of a woman.

"Glad to thee you, Morton," he lisped, because he was trying so desperately not to. "Come in. Thit down."

Morton acquiesced and, though it was a still summer night, he seemed to bring a blast with him. Finn noted his broad back, barbaric even through the conventional black cloth, and found himself regarding it from a woman's standpoint. This was the man who had won completely that lovely complex of femininity at whose shrine Mr. Finn worshipped. He knew not which was greater, his hatred or his admiration.

Morton saw and appeared not to see the fever-spots on either of Archie's cheeks, the unsteadiness of his hands and the strange glitter that would sometimes make his eyes formidable. Though they had almost nothing in common of which to talk, a curious excitement, a curious expectancy was upon them, and though Morton understood well enough what demoniac purpose animated his host, Mr. Finn naturally supposed that Morton was thinking pleasantly of the wine-cellar to which they presently descended.

Mr. Finn took his guest down, holding a tilted candle in his hand, and led him through a thick gauze of cobwebs which caught all over Morton's smart Tuxedo. Mr. Finn brushed him off and Morton protested loudly that he did not mind, "Oh, not at all." That was in view of the preciously molded bottles which they looted from the past. The champagne was fabulous, and Morton had to admit that his own cellar could not boast such honorable vintages as these.

"Have you just come into your heritage?" asked Morton genially when they were once more seated in the room above, sipping the clear, iced amber which turned the close night to Elysian coolness.

"In a way, yes," answered Mr. Finn. "My mother and I were temperate people. We had little occasion to use it for other than medicinal purposes."

Morton laughed loudly with a look of good-natured ridicule.

"Fancy that now!" he exclaimed amusedly. "My dear fellow, you're really unique. You put the rest of us erring mortals to shame. I don't sup-

pose you know how unworldly, how unsullied you are!"

"I suppose not," agreed Mr. Finn imperturbably, and refilled his glass. "I'm an unlucky devil. Always had to stay home and shoulder responsibilities. Never have knocked about like you, never fell in love with a woman, nor—" adroitly guiding the conversation, "had one fall in love with me."

Morton saw that he believed himself subtle and felt compassionate. He stepped obligingly into the trap.

"You certainly have been unfortunate then." He bent his convivial eye upon the bubbles in his glass; he stretched out his legs with a sense of well-being. "I dare say you wouldn't recognize love if it was thrown at your head."

Mr. Finn was not always a dullard. He smiled feebly.

"There is scarcely a chance of me being hit—that way," he answered drily. Then, with startling impudence:

"You, on the contrary, would both recognize and appropriate it."

Morton nodded incorrigibly.

"Why not, for heaven's sake, man? Didn't nature intend we should make grist of all that comes to the mill?"

Mr. Finn shuddered.

"It isn't a happy metaphor as applied to love. It isn't a pretty principle, anyway."

Morton made a gesture of indifference. Then a spark of interest gathered in his eye.

"It would interest me to know what you have got out of life. It would interest me enormously."

Mr. Finn thought a moment, then replied:

"Only what I put into it."

"Humph, and what would that be?"

There was another period of conscientious silence, and Mr. Finn sighed.

"Sympathy."

Morton smote his knee.

"Sympathy! By George, you're right, and that is what the world has given you in return—sympathy. You should have put a little more vigor into the game, my dear Finn. As it is you've made yourself an object of pity!"

"Pity?" gasped Finn, and blushed a blush that seemed to extend even to his finger-tips. The vein which bisected his forehead filled slowly with blood till it was hugely distended. "That isn't quite the same as sympathy, is it? However, if I had taken anything out of life I should be getting even less. I've never robbed a woman." His thin voice was ominously gentle.

"What do you mean, you've never robbed a woman?" Morton's questions had the effect of hitting one between the eyes.

"Nothing," said Mr. Finn, still gently, "only I was thinking that some men do. It isn't only in the animal kingdom that the strong prey upon the weak. Having seen one instance of it I am ready to believe that it happens every day. The selfish man gets what he wants and gets it in a way so extraordinarily cunning that he doesn't have to pay."

He was not given to fist-banging, but the hand which he closed on the edge of the table was a tangle of cords. "It's rotten, rotten!"

Morton's face, though exceedingly aware, bore no look of surprise.

"Oh, I don't know," he objected smoothly, "it all depends on your idea of stealing," and he expounded a doctrine frankly materialistic.

It was the cheekiest, the baldest revelation that Mr. Finn had ever heard, and the fact that Morton was so matter-of-fact about it figuratively threw his feet from under him and sent him crashing on the ice. He knew not what weapon to choose against this stony vandal, what argument might prevail against this savage. It was a stunning surprise. He had expected hypocrisy and mean evasion, and instead he had been given this! He could think of no method of attack, and in his angry futility he drank champagne. Morton watched him astutely, pausing now and then as though for a gesture, but in reality waiting for Mr. Finn to reveal himself.

Suddenly he was relieved. Mr. Finn, having emptied his third glass of cham-

pagne in passionate impotence, sprang up and said rather thickly:

"Come, I want to show you something."

"With pleasure."

They moved into the next room, a dim, depressing room, thunderous with the gun-metal grays of old firearms. Mr. Finn flung out his arms like a wind-mill.

"All my father's. . . . Now all mine!"

He seemed suddenly disheveled. Morton, on the contrary, was as trim, as salubrious, as square-rigged as when he came, and he showed a manly interest in the weapons. One after the other he picked up the clumsy pieces in his large, acquisitive hand.

"Your father must have been a remarkable man," he said pleasantly. "I've heard he was something of a soldier of fortune. You don't mind my saying that you hardly take after him."

"No," admitted Mr. Finn, having more and more difficulty with his speech, "only in this, that I can shoot!"

Morton gazed without flinching at a specially-constructed Colt automatic which Finn had taken from a cabinet.

"Ah," he said, "that I have also heard!"

And irrelevantly his mind went back to the sunny day when he had seen Mr. Finn's coat-tails disappearing into Lydia Curwood's house. Mr. Finn threw out the chamber of the weapon and filled it with pink and gray cartridges. Then he snapped it shut. Still Morton remained unperturbed. His eyes dwelt upon Mr. Finn almost lovingly. Mr. Finn the erstwhile effeminate, now palpably a nasty customer. The more benignly he bore with him, the more Mr. Finn's control slipped and finally he burst out.

"Randolph Morton, I denounce you as a cad. . . ."

"Yes?" drawled Morton and calmly, "I thought that was what you were going to do. That's why I came."

Mr. Finn's step stuttered backward. The weapon clattered from his hand.

"How did you know?"

"Easily enough—I guessed. Don't

you suppose I remarked the little shadow 'that went in and out with me'? At first I thought, 'Opposites attract. Archie Finn admires me for being nothing that he is. I've been ruthless in taking what I wanted while he has been a good son and given his life to his mother.' But as time went on and I couldn't shake you I decided there was some deeper method in your madness. Then one day I saw you turning in at a certain gate. . . ."

"And now you know," finished Mr. Finn, haggardly. "I want you to make amends to her. I insist upon a full and honorable payment."

"Just what sort of a payment do you mean?"

"Marriage," cried Mr. Finn. He almost sobbed the word.

"No," said Morton concisely, his brow twitching, and again, "no, you're crazy. Did she tell you she loves me?"

Mr. Finn's chest swelled.

"She never mentioned your name, but I wasn't long finding out. . . . As for loving you now—no, she didn't say that, you may be sure. I gathered that you had pretty well succeeded in killing her love. She's numb with the shame of an old hurt, that's all, and she wants the restitution that you owe her. She wants it and she's going to get it, else—"

"Wait a minute," begged Morton, not without dignity. "I'm not afraid of the truth. I'm not afraid of you either. If I had been I shouldn't have come. I'm here to face the music, I'm here to listen to all you have to say, but you'll accord me the same courtesy. Now, to begin with, you've just said that she long ago ceased to love me. Yet I understand that you propose we should mortgage the present to pay for the past. Is that the notion?" He snapped his fingers. "Finn, even such a conventional fellow as you ought to be too unconventional for that. I've too much respect for her and for myself to consider such a proposal."

Mr. Finn blinked uncertainly.

"If you'll be patient and forget this fantastic idea of killing me I'll explain a few things perhaps not wholly clear

to a recluse like yourself." He gave Finn the candid battery of his blue eyes. "I loved this lady in question and my feeling for her lasted a great many years. I'd have been proud to marry if it had been possible, but unfortunately I had a wife that I couldn't cast away like an old shoe. There was an element of pain in such a romance as ours, but, don't you see, there was a wild, gipsy tang of joy as well. . . . She drank as deeply of the cup as I. It may not have been honest morality, but it was honest love and there was more excuse for our *love* than there would be for our *marriage* now."

"No, no," protested Mr. Finn with strained faculties. "You're trying to confuse issues in my mind. You're hiding behind your selfishness and trying to make me think I don't want to find you."

"All right," cried Morton fiercely, "look at it this way—you want to see the right thing done by her. Then consider what the right thing is. I tell you she'd have a better chance of happiness with another man. She'd start fresh with him; she wouldn't start with her dead love in a jar like Isabella with the pot o' Basil!" He broke off staring at Mr. Finn's electrified face. "Looka here, why are you so concerned in her affairs?"

"I?" gasped Mr. Finn.

A pain shot through his head.

Morton's probing smile seemed to strip him of his poor garments of secrecy. He jumped nervously when a sudden hand was clapped on his shoulder. His eye wandered, but could not get away.

"Archibald Finn," said Morton very soberly, "you're a man I like. I found myself liking you when I realized why you were camping on my trail. To myself I said, 'The sly dog, he's trying to get his teeth in my trousers leg,' and tonight in this room I have known that you would be game enough to kill me for a principle. A mistaken idea, but you've shown courage and that's the main thing. And more important than all, you'd have been willing to turn her

over to me when you wanted her *yourself*!"

And as poor Mr. Finn showed himself completely without defence Morton went on softly:

"This has all come about because you were perfectly literal in believing what she told you. Why, Finn, you can't hope to understand women because they don't understand *themselves*. She doesn't really want to marry me—she only thinks she does. She thinks she wants to stay on in the empty theatre of our love and have a box seat. But she's wrong. It's a damned dull business when the play is ended. . . ."

V

It was after long consideration that Mr. Finn decided it was Lydia's right to be told, not crudely what had passed between Morton and himself, but a merciful adaptation. After many private rehearsals he gave her this adaptation and in his innocence believed that he had spared her pride. It was only, he said, that Morton feared he could never make her happy—now. And seeing him so agonized for fear that she might be hurt, Lydia pretended gamely that she had not been. She even achieved a smile and her eyes were dry.

"But one thing—," recalled Mr. Finn, and his voice was queer,—"one thing he said I have to thank him for. He said, 'She would have a better chance for happiness with another man.' Oh, I ask you to believe that your happiness has been first with me from the start, else I couldn't have—I couldn't have—"

Blindly she put her hand over his.

"I wish," began Mr. Finn again earnestly, "that is—won't you marry me after all?"

Slowly she turned her head, turning her thought as well to focus upon him. The simplicity, the goodness of the man's nature was in his eyes—waiting. For the first time she saw him sweetly, with a woman's maternal forgiveness of what he was not, a recognition of all that he was,—no figure to capture the imagination such as Randolph Morton

had been, but whereas Morton was merely masculine she now perceived that Mr. Finn was manly. He was middle-aged, but happiness would make him younger, he was nearly bald, but there was always the chance that his hair would grow.

"Per-haps," she whispered.



The Life-Guard

By T. F. Mitchell

SHE it was who performed the valiant act.
He was going down for the third time when she saved him.
"You won't drink any more of that cellar poison tonight!" she ordered.



Little Dirge

By Jean Starr Untermeyer

AS hearts have broken, let young hearts break;
Let slow feet tread a measure, feet have trod before.
There gleams a pathway I shall never take;
Here dies a grief will trouble me no more.

Only swift feet may overtake desire;
Only young hearts can soar.
My goal is beckoning from a safe hearth-fire—
My youth is slipping out the door.



LOVE creeps up behind a man and puts its fingers over his eyes. Marriage springs out from a doorway and sandbags him.



Portraits of Stage Ladies

An Interviewer Meets the Celebrities

By Carlton Wright Miles

I

The First Interview

WE lunched at a fashionable hotel. "You will have," she said, looking at my plumpish figure, "steak minute and French pastry."

"Eggs benedict," I answered firmly. She frowned.

"I am no actress," she said. "I am *myself*. What I do is individual. I do not care what you write about me. I can write better than you. Have you seen my magazine stories? No? I will send them to you."

She ordered strawberries and Hungarian goulash.

"My father was an Englishman," she continued. "My mother was a princess. What do I care for these *canaille* before whom I am forced to play! It ees amusin', yes?"

She shrugged her shoulders and remembered her accent.

"My beauty is famous. Yes? But what is beauty? I am an aristocrat. Why do you say that I have the flag in the wings ready to use it if necessary? I don't understand. I have no flag. I have no country. I should like to have an island where all the fine people—the people who love the arts—might have an aesthetic union. And I would be queen of the island."

She choked on a strawberry.

"Thousands come to see me, to see this so ugly face." She removed her veil. "Am I beautiful? Well. Yet for fourteen years my virtue has not been in danger."

She screamed. "Take the goulash away. *Mon Dieu!* Garlic in April!"

She kicked the waiter.

"I am the only satirist on the stage," she murmured. "I am *myself*. My mother was a princess—no, I have told you that. Use what you want for the interview, but do not quote me."

She beckoned the headwaiter.

"Tell the orchestra to play 'The Rosary,'" she commanded.

Chanting the lines of the song, she paused to order alligator pear salad and biscuit tortoni.

"Now what do you think of me?" she hissed.

II

The Second Interview

SHE sat on a divan cuddling a dirty dog.

"You have heard of me," she began, pushing lifeless golden hair from her eyes, "as the woman who doesn't care. It isn't true. I am very sensitive. Sometimes I am so sensitive that I feel I cannot face those great crowds of people. But I must. It is my duty. They love me so. I am a soldier. I obey orders. I am the servant of my public."

The dog bit my ankles.

"Go away, little pet," she said. "Isn't Oscar playful? He is named for Oscar Wilde. I love his books. I can read. You may not believe it. They say *such* things about me! People have hurt me very, very deeply."

She fell to weeping.

"They little know when they see me

romping on the stage how unhappy I really am," she sobbed. "I am French, you know. That is why I have such a voluble temperament. Because my mother was a Frenchwoman I sing the 'Marseillaise.' I sing it with white tights and a silver tunic. And I stand quite still. I do not run about the stage—well, hardly at all."

The dog bit her shin.

"Get away, you little devil!" she yelled, and threw it into the bathtub.

"I love the Bible," she continued. "It is my only friend. Now I read only stories with Biblical characters in them. Do you know any? I have just finished 'Ben Hur' and 'The Sorrows of Satan.' Now I am reading the Old Testament. I have got to Numbers. It is very interesting." She stressed the wrong syllable. "Sometimes I sit up all night and read Job.

"No one knows me. I am an enigma. I am the saddest woman in the world. I shall retire soon. How old do you think I am? Go on. I'm thirty. Gosh, I don't know why I tell you the darnedest things."

III

The Third Interview

THE Great Star was waiting promptly in the lobby. She lifted a thick white veil and extended a thin hand.

"I didn't understand it was to be an interview," she said in a tone of gentle reproof.

Basilisk eyes from behind the white veil transfixed me. I clutched a wicker couch.

"Now if there were something I might talk about," she said.

"What do you think of Edward Sheldon as a playwright?" I stuttered.

"I think him a very intelligent young man."

Silence.

"I knew him years ago when he was at Harvard."

Silence.

"Are you a Harvard man?"

"No."

"Oh!"

Eternity of silence.

"Now if there were something I might talk about," she repeated. "There are the motion pictures. I call them the NEW ART," she said in hushed voice, elbow on knee, chin in hand, looking far into the dim distance.

"Or I might talk about the Boy Scout movement. I think it is the most important movement of the present time. In fact I think it is the most important. Yes, it is very, very important. It makes for peace everywhere, except down in Mexico. Of course I should like to see them all killed off there. On account of the bull-fights."

A fuzzy man drew near.

She welcomed him briskly.

"Ah," she exuded, "I was just telling this young man about the Boy Scout movement."

"Ah," he inhaled. "And is he interested in the great movement?"

"No, I don't think so," she clipped her words. "He's a newspaperman."

IV

The Fourth Interview

HER black hair fell around her face in little ringlets. She pushed them away with unclean fingers and toyed with her beads. A smile went over her face. She was young.

"To think that in six short seasons I have gained this!" she said, pointing to her gold-mounted toilet set. "It is wonderful to work with such a manager. It is an Inspiration. It is a Joy. What is it Shakespeare says? 'All the world's a stage!' Isn't he wonderful? Shakespeare, I mean."

A maid approached with a note.

"No, tell all who call that I cannot accept their invitations. Thank them all kindly and send each one an autographed photograph and a carnation. I must save myself for my performance tonight.

"I am so grateful," she said in a voice of awe, "for this great opportunity. Not that I care much for the part. You know as well as I that it isn't a good part. But He has promised me such wonderful

things for next season. Wonderful!"
She mused.

"My greatest ambition," she said, with a poignant look of ineffable sweetness, "is to play Viola—Shakespeare, you know."

V

The Fifth Interview

"GELLI!"

"YELLI!"

Two yellow-and-black butterflies sat on the edge of a couch eating chicken salad and drinking Coca-Cola.

"No lobster. Ptomaines," warned Yelli.

Gelli began:

"We're just two little girls trying to get along."

"Remember, Gelli, when we worked for \$30 a week, joint engagement and—"

"Remember, Yelli, when momma made all them costumes and—"

"Ain't it different, now, Gelli, when we get these big salaries? It—"

"We try too hard to speak English. We have no patience with foreigners—"

"When we see people who come over here and don't try to talk right, we—"

"Yes, as I was saying, we always say: 'How is that you don't speak good English? How is that?'"

"We get fine salaries, too. How much, Gelli?"

"Oh, I forget. Figures always make me dizzy."

"We give away so much to charity. Not a girl but has asked us for money this season. Why—"

"In Oklahoma City we give \$500 to a doctor. We always—"

"Momma tells us we throw it away like noodle-soup. We—"

"Momma she ain't here today. She—"

"Momma she lost eighty cents playing pinochle last night. It always makes momma sick to lose."

"Gelli!"

"Yelli!"

VI

The Sixth Interview

"I ALWAYS have felt it my duty to play wantons," said the Emotional Star, looking up from her copy of Freud. "It is given to everyone on earth to have a mission. Mine was to play fallen women. For eighteen years I have played what the world ignorantly calls bad women. I always knew it would be so. Even in my nursery I cried, 'I want to play wantons. I want to play wantons!'"

"You remember that Alexandre Dumas *fil*s wrote 'Camille' to set forth the cause of the wanton. I have carried out the same idea in my stage work." She beat her chest. "I am a strange creature of moods and personalities, my inheritance through centuries of ancestors of many races—with one great asset—balance."

The telephone rang.

She approached it with an ophidian glide.

"Right away," she said.

She returned smiling.

"Excuse me now, please. I've got a date."



Pastel Hollandais

By Malory Frere

NICOLAS sits in front of his tobacco-shop all day long, puffing upon his long pipe and blowing out the smoke in thin, curved wisps. Sometimes he nods his head at a friend who passes; but when the old men of the village gather together to speak of the health of the queen or the price of the krone, they never ask Nicolas to join them, for he is wise and thinks his own thoughts: a taciturn man who answers only "yes" and "no," who never laughs and who must be a deep philosopher.

Nicolas wonders why the fly should have chosen his nose of all places on which to settle and whether there will be cauliflower or lettuce for dinner and what is the name of the new blonde beer-girl at the Sign of the Yellow Duck in Amsterdam.



Song

By Sydney King Russell

WHAT can I say of April
Or what can I leave unsaid
Who in a barren hour believed
April was dead?

Dead, and long I mourned her,
Sought her in sun and rain
Till, with a rush of crimson,
April was born again.

Now I can jest with folly,
Smile at my young heart's fears,—
But how can I look at April
Save through a mist of tears?



The Biggest Man in Town

By *W. C. Wilber*

I

WHEN Harold J. Swanson stepped out of the elevator into the lobby of the Mohawk House each morning at 9.30 o'clock and began his customary leisurely progress toward the grill, the lobby-hounds sat up, stirring themselves from the depths of the big, old-fashioned leather seats, and enjoyed an ocular feast. Harold J., as he was familiarly known to our city, was what we called "well groomed." His complexion was ruddy; his clothes "set well." In a word, he had an air about him.

He was a tall man, with a thick neck which stood out in a pink fold above his collar. He had the lips and chin of a Caligula—a beneficent Caligula. His eyes were blue—too blue, and slightly too prominent behind his shell-rimmed glasses. His glance roved here and there, singling out acquaintances to whom he bowed. The recipient of a bow at once returned the salute with a show of deference. Harold J. Swanson was the biggest man in town.

He made his money in oil, at the time when oil stocks boomed tremendously. Somehow—no one knew quite how—Harold J. became the heart of the Coast Oil company. Rather, he *was* the Coast Oil company. Not that he was a get-rich-quick. Nothing of the sort. The Swansons were one of our oldest families. They dated back at least to 1830, when Old Asa Swanson began the foundation of a solid fortune with a canal-boat and a team of lusty mules.

Old Asa built the Swanson mansion, with a mansard roof and a cupola; one

of the first in town. The situation of the mansion had been one of the few mistakes in judgment which Old Asa made. He built it downtown, where, from the cupola, he could command a view of the canal, the Board of Trade building and the Swanson fleet of canal-boats, each painted white with red stripes at the bow and stern. Now the mansion was an Italian tenement, filled with queer smells and small, tattered children, and Harold J., grandson of its builder, lived in a pale gray sandstone pile on First Avenue.

Harold J. lived in the place when he was "at home," which was seldom. There were rumors that he and his wife, who had been a Sneffer, of the Great Falls Sneffers, didn't get along. In fact, it was the gossip that Mrs. Swanson, *née* Sneffer, had hurled a platter at her spouse when he came home soused from the City Club one night, and that Harold J. had retaliated with a cup of hot bouillon. Anyway, Harold J. moved to Suite 1000 at the Mohawk House the next morning, taking with him his combined chauffeur and valet. Thence he came home only when a social event which required the master of the house was at hand.

This was an admirable arrangement from all viewpoints. Mrs. Swanson, a lean woman with a saturnine face, had become known in our city for her labors in behalf of "uplift." "Uplift" held no interest for Harold J. His wife occasionally told the Rev. J. Bailey Stere, of the Avenue Baptist Church, that he had low tastes, hinting vaguely of evil. The Rev. Stere wisely let these utterances go no farther. Old Asa Swanson

had helped build the church and on Easter Sunday Harold J. laid a lavender check for a thousand dollars on the plate.

When Harold J. stopped at the hotel cigar-stand for his morning cigars, an occasional penurious acquaintance of the great man would sidle up, towing a wondering stranger, and whisper, in a good loud stage whisper:

"That's Harold J. Swanson—one of the biggest men in town. In fact, he's the *biggest* man in town!"

If the whisper reached the ear of the quarry, it was good for free drinks in the little white bar. Harold J. would turn in his tracks and would gaze expansively. Then he would join the party in the most democratic of spirits and would lead the way to the spot where four bartenders worked on week days and six on Sundays.

After prohibition became an established fact, Harold J. was a little more cautious. It took a hanger-on of reputation to get his ear with the blatant flattery. Once touched, however, by the slogan—"biggest man in town"—and after the party had been cautiously surveyed out of the corner of the slightly too blue and slightly too prominent eyes, he would lead the way to the elevator and Suite 1000. There he would lug bottle after bottle of "swell stuff" from an inner press and would not relax his efforts until the party was well to the windward. He drank with his guests, did Harold J., and barring a heightened color showed none the worse for it. Later he bragged about his drinking feats. It was his delight, he said, to show the proletariat its hopeless incapacity in the drinking line.

In the City Club, where he lunched, he would pour himself a small potion out of a curved pocket flask and would say:

"Well, I got Sorenson stewed this morning. You wouldn't think a Jew gambler would hop to it that way, but he did—and he took the rest of the crowd along with him. Oh, but they were lit! It's a pitiful sight to show a bottle that looks right to those boys nowadays—they certainly do hop to it!"

Then the luncheon crowd at table No. 1 would laugh, snicker or giggle, depending upon the man and the impression he desired to make. Old Vaness, president of the City Bank, who was a deacon in the Avenue church and an ardent prohibitionist, usually led off with a laugh that sounded like the neighing of a pony.

"Heh! Heh! Pretty good—pretty good, Harold!" he would say.

It was rumored, and old Vaness bore a reverent and religious look when he rumored it, that Swanson's income was more than \$1000 a day! It was a fabulous sum to our city. The City Bank handled the finances of the Coast Oil company. Old Vaness would have forsworn his faith, made a journey to Mecca and come back wearing a green turban ere he would have lost that account.

Harold J. always awoke punctually at 8 o'clock in the morning and called stranglingly for Sweigert, the combined chauffeur-valet whom he had saved from the draft because he was the only man in town who could keep the Swanson Mercedes cars in order, and because he alone could translate, from the mixed remarks of his master at 2 a. m., whether it was the wish of Harold J. to be conveyed to Suite 1000 or to another palace of joy.

"Sch-Sch-Sweigert!"

"Yessir!"

Instantly the invaluable Sweigert was at the side of his master, bearing a golden pick-me-up. Harold J. swallowed it, coughed hoarsely, and puffed for a moment at the thick Egyptian cigarette which Sweigert had ready to hand. Then, running his hands through his thin hair, he began to doff from his gross white body the lavender silk pajamas which were his vogue.

"Your bawth is ready, sir!" Sweigert had a bit of pride himself; it was an acquired Cockney accent.

Sweigert, kowtowing like a Cantonese coolie, esquired the oil king to his tub, and having seen him safely in and splashing and snorting about, took in the papers, laid out his master's clothes,

discreetly did away with empty and near-empty bottles, and opened a fresh bottle of Scotch. Then he slid away to bring the big lavender speedster from the garage. Harold J. affected lavender and each morning wore a boutonniere of violets.

The kowtowing, which thus opened the day for Harold J., was continued by the elevator operator, the hotel mail clerk, the clerk at the cigar-stand, the waiter in the grill and the porter who manipulated the revolving door. Unless the lobby harpies, lips a-twitch for prime Scotch, led him astray, Harold J. reached the company office in the Chamber of Commerce building at 10.30.

The kowtowing continued. Office-boys, stenographers, even old Pryme himself, kowtowed, smirked, and endeavored to ingratiate themselves.

Pryme, who knew more of the oil business than Harold J. could ever know, and who was reputed to be paid a fabulous salary for that knowledge, was a little thin man clad in baggy trousers and an alpaca office coat. Old Pryme—he was but little older than Harold J., though everybody called him “old”—knew that he knew *with* more of the affairs of the Coast Oil company than did his master, yet the magnificence of Harold J., his metropolitan clothes, the scent of expensive liquor and expensive cigars, all overawed him. He, too, kowtowed.

“How’s things, Pryme?” Harold J. would question, brusquely.

“Excellent, sir!”

With a brief survey of the smirking office girls, Harold J. would enter his private office, unlock the bottom drawer of his big, useless desk, take out a bottle and pour out a stiff drink. He would read, hazily, and sometimes without the slightest comprehension, the letters which Pryme had laid out on the glass-covered mahogany. Then he would light up a thick cigarette and gaze listlessly from the window. The whiff of smoke, trickling through the half-open door, was Pryme’s signal fire. He would enter rapidly and quietly.

“Just a few matters, sir, that need your personal attention.”

Pryme would thrust a pen into his master’s large, well-manicured hand. Harold J., with a dull glance at the various documents, would sign “Harold J. Swanson, President,” in large, ill-formed letters. Pryme would slide vaguely out. Harold J. would puff idly at his cigarette, gazing vacantly at the oil portrait of Old Asa Swanson or out of the window. Presently he would rise, take up his gloves and cane, and saunter out.

“If it’s anything important, Pryme, leave word for me at the club.”

With the eyes of the entire office force at his back, Harold J. would march through the door. His day’s labor was over.

Not that he was a fool—by no means. It was simply that he had nothing to think about. The Coast Oil company was dripping success with every new gusher, and that meant to him all that he wanted of life—local fame, the reverence due to the possession of wealth, the bodily pampering that had been his since birth, and the ability to do as he pleased.

To do as he pleased meant “parties” to Harold J. His parties were the talk and scandal of our city. They began in his freshman year in college when he came home for summer vacation driving a fast tandem with a girl at his side—a girl who looked as though she had practically no reputation and didn’t care much, anyway.

It took all the Swanson pull to keep this bit of scandal from the public prints, but even so, it was a choice bit of gossip. Old Vaness, who now snickered at his open flaunt of the eighteenth amendment, had vowed the boy would come to no good end.

He renewed the vow until the Coast Oil company came into being and then he changed his tune, severely taking to task those who reminded him of his prognostication.

“A fine, high-spirited fellow! A coming business man!” said Old Vaness. “Mark my words, he’ll be the biggest

man in town! Why, do you know, his balance—"

The parties grew heartier and heartier, more and more of a joy to middle-class housewives who got wind of them through their spouses, as Harold J. popped through the twenties, zipped through the thirties, roared through the forties, and began to zoom into the fifties. A party, seemingly, was the one thing that held interest for him. Now that he and his wife were at loggerheads and every débutante in town had been warned away from the expansive figure with the too blue, too prominent eyes—well, they caused lots of talk.

"I was out with Harold J. Swanson last night. Believe me, when he gives a party, it's real!" This was the proudest boast of the local demimondaines.

Little shopgirls, watching the big lavender speedster glide up Main Street, stared at it, fascinated. The lavender car, piloted by the skilful and wooden-faced Sweigert, had figured in many a snappy backstairs tale.

The parties usually started out respectably enough, with Harold J. at the head of a jolly group of young-old men at the City Club, or in Suite 1000. Hilarity grew. Someone suggested a party. The big car was sent for, and came. Then the party went to Hilery's, where a jazz band of the less jazzy sort lured respectable, middle-class maidens to the foxtrot. Hilery himself, fat and gross, with little black eyes peering from a wrinkled face, welcomed them and guided them to the best table.

From Hilery's the party would steer for the Wisteria, where a noisier jazz band held forth. From the Wisteria, with, perhaps, a trip to the stage door of the Empire, the party, now occupying the big car and several taxis, would go to Grif's, where six satin-coated negroes drew grotesque noises from their instruments while half-drunken couples swayed to and fro on the dance floor.

"Some party!"

This would be the remark at this stage of proceedings. All round the table would come whispers—some drunken,

some half-drunken—enlightening the coryphees that "Harold J. Swanson—him there—he's biggest' man in town!" The remarks would remind their host that Sweigert, in the big car, had best go back to town for more liquor.

The party usually came to an end at Jim's, where three negroes, sweating and hallooing, slogged from their instruments the rhythmic, barbaric beating of tomtoms; or else it came to an end in the Alley, a narrow street, once the mews of the town, where darkened bordellos—converted stables with bright brass rails—grimly confronted each other. One of them, curiously enough, had been the stable of Old Asa Swanson.

It was here, on the spot that once echoed to the stamping of the Swanson stable, that Harold J. met Marie Gross.

II

MARIE left the Golden Crook company in our city after kicking up her pretty heels twice a day for the first half of the week. She packed her meagre belongings and despite the plea of the manager, who offered her more money because she was the "class of the show," she quit.

"I'm tired of troupin'," she said.

Marie found a berth in a rooming house in Ocher Street, a tall brick building once occupied by a family of local aristocrats, but now given over to dubious transients, bedbugs, and a subtle odor of physical and moral decay. She "rested up." She slept till noon each day; then she breakfasted at a little Greek restaurant in the neighborhood; then she idled her way up and down Main Street.

She was a slim girl, darkly pretty, with hair of that hue which is described as blue-black—a shimmering black with purple luster in certain lights. She had the trick of personality which made her presence subtly felt; one noticed her in a crowd.

The hawk-faced landlady of Ocher Street kept close watch of Marie. When she felt the time was ripe, and the girl's slender roll of bills had been well

depleted, she talked guardedly over the hall telephone for a few moments. The next day at noon, as Marie was rising, she had a caller, a stout woman with a good-humored face, decently clad in black.

"I'm Mrs. Arnold—Lottie Arnold," she said. Then she stepped into Marie's little room and closed the door. There came a murmur of voices. Then Marie packed up her battered suitcase while the stout woman waited, and they went away together.

Marie was brought forcefully to Harold J.'s attention one bright morning just as he was about to pick up his gloves and cane and call it a day. A slim man with darkly circled eyes pushed through the swinging gate with a muttered word to the youth in charge, hurriedly crossed the main office and entered Harold J.'s sanctum without the formality of knocking. He breathed fast and gulped excitedly. There was an odor of liquor about him; he seemed to be swimming in a sort of alcoholic aura.

"Hello, Dicky! How's brokering?" Harold J. swung about and faced his caller.

"Rotten, Harold!" Dicky's brown eyes glanced shiftily away from the blue, protuberant ones. "Harold, I'm in a mess—a rotten mess. I've got to have \$10,000 in the City Bank before noon, or—or—my God, Harold! I'll go to jail!"

The story tumbled from his lips in an almost incoherent splutter. He had monkeyed with old Mrs. Green's account, was the substance of it. Somehow the old woman had suspected; she was coming at noon for an accounting. Ten thousand to old Mrs. Green was a drop in the bucket, but Harold J. knew her venom—she would have blood.

"What the hell did you do with it, Dicky?" queried Harold J.

"Spent it—spent it in ten days!"

"Spent it? Here? In this town? In ten days?" The full voice betokened rising amazement. It was unbelievable! Dicky nodded and gulped.

"Hell's bells!" There was a gleam of

admiration in the blue, protuberant eyes. The oil king laughed a great horse-laugh. "Hell's bells, Dicky! I didn't think it could be done!"

He swung back to the big desk, took his private checkbook and wrote out a lavender check. Then he shut off Dicky's babble of thanks with a slap on the back that turned the babble into racking coughs.

"Introduce me to the lady, Dicky!" he said.

Dicky turned spitefully, a flicker of jealousy in his eyes. He, too, laughed, a trembling laugh that held little mirth.

"Introduce yourself, Harold!" he said. "Her name's Marie—she's in Lottie Arnold's—your grandfather's old stable!"

Harold J. gave a wonderful party at Lottie Arnold's. Rumors of a wild time crept out and set the scandalmongers of our city agog. It was breathed about that "wine flowed like water." This was the way the superlative in parties was described in our city.

When the party was over, Harold J., with his eyes bloodshot and more protuberant than ever, said good night to Marie and walked a little unsteadily to the door. Lottie Arnold slumped back in her chair, breathing drunkenly. A girl rested her head on her arms and murmured. "Some party, Kid—some party!" Two young-old men sat on the floor, laughing vacantly at each other. "How'd you stay sober?" asked Harold J., with the suspicion of a burr in his voice. The girl smiled. Her black eyes flashed the hint of a challenge to the blue ones.

Harold J. answered the challenge. It was no time at all before Marie had left the Alley and the old Swanson stable and had set up for herself in a choice little apartment near the park. Each night, and sometimes during the day as well, one of the big lavender cars stood in front, with the wooden-faced Sweigert at the wheel.

Occasionally the girl drove downtown in one of the big cars. It seemed to be Harold J.'s orders to keep off Main Street, because on these occasions Sweig-

gert drove down Lincoln Street. The big car stopped at the City Bank for a moment and the girl deposited a lavender check or two to the credit of Marie Gross's account. The teller grumblingly told his wife that Harold J.'s "girl" was getting rich on what Harold gave her.

It was no surprise when Mrs. Harold J., despairing of Uplift under the circumstances, sued for divorce. Harold J. didn't fight the suit. It was rumored that he settled a million, with life use of the gray sandstone pile on the avenue, upon the partner of his joys and sorrows when the decree was handed down.

Mrs. Swanson went into seclusion and seldom appeared in public. To the Rev. J. Bailey Stere she moaned that Harold J. "had low tastes." He inevitably would be ruined, she said, by a disgusting taste for the low.

And yet, surprising as it may seem to the moralists, it was not a taste for the low that proved the undoing of Harold J. Of course Old Vaness and the rest of his crowd held up poor Harold as a horrible example, but, to make it short, the bottom fell out of oil.

The bottom fell out one summer morning, just as Harold J., who was beginning to show pouches beneath the eyes and many wrinkles, had left the office for the day. Pryme, the office manager, glanced at the ticker and then stood silent for ten minutes, watching the tape roll from the machine in little jerks. Then, very pale, he turned to the office force and said:

"Find Mr. Swanson! Get the girl at the switchboard busy—tell her to phone everywhere! Get messenger boys—a flock of 'em! Send 'em out! Get busy!" Then he went back to the ticker.

The switchboard girl, daring everything, got Harold J. on the wire at Marie's little apartment an hour later. Old Pryme, who had been dancing about in profane impatience, grabbed the nearest instrument and began to talk.

Harold J., holding the little ivory instrument in Marie's boudoir, turned a sort of dirty gray as Pryme's excited

voice twanged over the wire. Marie, a little pale herself, though she had no inkling of what it was all about, crept nearer, seeking to piece together the scattered words and phrases which she heard.

"I'll be there in ten minutes," said Harold J.

The color flowed back into his face with a rush. Something of the spirit of Old Asa Swanson seemed to leap to his eyes.

"What is it, Harold, huh?" the girl's voice halted him in his dash for the door.

"Hell's bells! I'm broke, that's all!"

The word "broke" burst from his lips like a sudden curse. He ran down the steps that led from the terraced apartment and sprang into the lavender speedster. Sweigert, with a trace of curiosity in his immobile face, twitched at the gearshift, urged to sudden activity by a curse from his master. The big car surged forward.

"How's things, Pryme?"

Harold J.'s voice, ordinarily full, came thinly from his throat. His blue protuberant eyes swept Old Pryme's face, seeking the reassurance that was not there.

"Bad!" answered the old man.

The office surged with motion. Messengers came and went; phones buzzed. And always the ticker in the corner jerked forth bad news. Harold J. took one long look at the tape and his jaw set grimly. It would be an uphill battle to save the Coast Oil company. Old Pryme, seasoned warrior of the pit that he was, had massed his forces for a last stand. His little gimlet eyes bored at Harold J. How would the grandson of Old Asa take it?

Something of the hardness and dogged courage of the old buccaneer of the towpath sprang to life in Harold J. His eyes glistened with the joy of battle that had been his grandsire's. The flush left his face and he was pale, except for the little lined veins at his cheekbones; they glowed scarlet. He walked into his office, away from the rush, and lit one of his thick cigarettes.

"How bad?" he asked.

"We'll need a quarter of a million," said Pryme quietly. Then the taut nerves of the little man gave way. He babbled, "My God, Mr. Swanson, the market's gone to hell! We'll never get clear—never!"

Harold J. took one long draw at the cigarette. The veins in his thick neck stood out like cords. Then he strode from the office.

"Come on, Pryme!"

It was a command uttered in the fighting snarl of Old Asa. Pryme, halting only to grab a sheaf of papers from his desk, followed at his heels. Sweigert swung the big speedster toward the City Bank as the voice of Old Asa, a voice he had never heard before, commanded.

Vaness kept them waiting. Ordinarily he would have come out of his big, bare private office rubbing his hand and welcoming them. But birds of ill tidings were abroad. Harold J. fussed and fumed and cursed Old Vaness in a hearty undertone. Pryme counted the very seconds on his big, old-fashioned watch.

"Mr. Vaness will see you now." An assistant with curious eyes ushered them into the banker's presence. There was nothing of the neighing joker nor the church deacon about Old Vaness now. He was grim and cold, with a canine gleam in his eyes. It was the ancient gleam of the pack, when a leader totters and falls. He kept them waiting a half-minute more, while his eyes searched the blue, protuberant ones opposite him.

"Well?" he said.

"They've got me on the run. I'll have to have help, I suppose." Harold J. made the statement as if it were a foregone conclusion that the help would be given.

It was a tactical error. Old Pryme sensed it and broke into the conversation.

"Not on the run, exactly," he said, with a hard little laugh. "The flurry caught us a little short."

"That's it," said Harold J. "We got caught a little short, that's all. We'll

need a quarter of a million; you'll take our paper, of course?"

"No," said Vaness.

There was finality in the brief word. Harold J. gazed at him—belligerently—amazed.

Old Pryme lost his grip on himself and babbled, waving his sheaf of papers before the banker's eyes.

"My God, Mr. Vaness!" he said. "You know the value of our holdings—why, we're as good as the wheat! They're squeezing us a bit—that is all! My God, Mr. Vaness—!"

"No," said Vaness again.

Pryme ceased babbling. Harold J. glared at Vaness like a trapped dog glaring at a jackal. Then he nodded stiffly, and turned to go. Vaness stopped him with a gesture. He half-rose, and leaned over his big desk, his grizzled sideburns trembling with sheer malignity.

"I told them so—" he said. "I told them you'd go to hell! I told them—with your loose women, and your carousing and drinking—I told them! And it's come true!"

Swanson sneered at him. He banged the big mahogany door upon the banker's futile mouthings. Old Pryme's legs sagged in his baggy trousers. This was the end. His little gimlet eyes sought the blue, protuberant ones. They blazed with the spirit of Old Asa. Harold J. was going down fighting.

"Go back to the office, Pryme," he said. "Call a cab. I'll phone you in fifteen minutes."

III

THE big lavender car surged away again. Harold J. was going home—not to Suite 1000, nor to the apartment near the park, but to the big, pale gray sandstone pile on the avenue. The car drew up at the street entrance with a squeak of brakes. Harold J. sprang out and rang the bell.

"Tell Mrs. Swanson I want to see her," he said. His eyes roved over the well-known room as he waited. The footman returned.

"Mrs. Swanson will not see you," he said.

"She's got to!" said Harold J. "She's got to! Tell her it's important—tell her it's business!"

"Business!" An acid voice brought him round with a whirl.

The woman would not let him go without a parting jibe. Her lean face twitched with rage.

"I know what the business is—you want to borrow! Mr. Vaness phoned me. He says you're broke, Harold! Broke! Ruined! Ruined by your taste for the low! Go back now to that thing—that hussy!"

Her voice rose in a torrent of invective. Harold J. backed away, while the lean woman—hands outspread like claws—pursued him to the door. Her voice followed him as he sped away in the big lavender car.

Harold J. raced back to the office. The spirit of Old Asa had begun to ebb, but for an hour he telephoned for help—telephoned to friends, acquaintances, even to strangers. It was useless. They were already whispering the news of the crash in the lobby of the Mohawk House. The office gradually settled back to calm—a strained calm, during which idle stenographers sat listlessly at their desks or whispered together in the corners. Old Pryme, who had long since given up the fight, sat at his desk strumming a pen against the plate-glass top.

"Well, we're through, Pryme."

Harold J. came out of his private office with the lagging step of a man who has run a hard race. The flaming fighting spirit of Old Asa had quite left his eyes. He stopped at Pryme's desk and the old man wondered at the lines in the carefully massaged face, the gray in the hair and the pouches beneath the eyes.

"Why, he's an old man!" thought Pryme. "He's an old man! He must be getting along toward sixty, at that!"

"Is there enough money in the cash drawer to pay off the help?" asked Harold J. Pryme counted it.

"It lacks about three hundred, Mr. Swanson."

Harold J. pulled a roll of notes from his pocket and slowly peeled off six fifties. He put the rest carefully back. It was all the money he had in the world. Then, without a word of farewell, he turned and left the office of the Coast Oil company.

The big lavender car was at the curb. Sweigert, his eyes bright with unsatisfied curiosity, seemed to have lost a little of his obsequiousness. Harold J. stopped at the florist's and bought a fresh boutonniere of violets. He stopped at a side street barber shop and ordered a massage.

"Rub hard—till the skin is red!" he said, amazed at the flaccid pallor of the reflection in the mirror.

Then he went back to the Mohawk House. He swung his cane jauntily as he walked through the lobby, smiling and bowing. They knew he was hit, he reflected, but did they know he was mortally hurt? Curious, hard glances followed him. Harold J. was taking his medicine well. Even those who hated him as old Vaness hated him admitted it.

There was the bit of a swagger to Harold J.'s walk; his ruddy skin was ruddier than usual. He stopped at the cigar stand and filled his pocketcase, smiling at the girl who served him. He stopped in the grill and ate heartily; he hadn't felt such an appetite for years. Then he signed the check, tipped the waiter prodigally, and walked through the lobby to the elevator. He imagined that all eyes were upon him; that there was a flood of whispered comment:

"That's Harold J. Swanson—he used to be the biggest man in town; but he's broke now!"

IV

For two days and nights no one saw him save Sweigert, who brought up his meals and shaved him. The buzz of gossip ran up and down Main Street and through the lobby of the Mohawk House. Harold J. was broke—dead

broke, too; his wife had thrown him bodily from the house when he sought her aid; his "girl" had turned him flat when the news reached her. These and countless other choice bits gave flair to the most sensational scandal that our city ever knew.

"What's he doing?" asked the *maitre de hôtel*, curiously, when Sweigert brought down a tray of dirty dishes.

"Hittin' the booze!" answered the man.

Marie kept the telephone ringing until Sweigert ordered the switchboard to desist from ringing Suite 1000. Curiously enough, Marie had picked up only a little of the gossip. She knew that Harold J. had been hit; she didn't know that he was ruined.

The third morning Harold J. sat up in bed and called strangely for Sweigert. The man answered—swiftly, silently, as was his custom—the usual pick-me-up in his hand. Harold J. swallowed it, puffed for a moment at the thick cigarette, and said:

"First—and—last—today!"

He looked appraisingly in the mirror at his bloated face, with its stubble of grayish beard, and turned from the sight with a shudder. He suddenly felt old—old, and out of sorts. If he only had a home—with loved ones!

"Come on, Sweigert! Give me my shave!" he called.

After his shave and massage he dressed with greatest care and sent Sweigert out for his customary *boutonnière*. He looked at the food on his breakfast tray with loathing.

"I'm sick, Sweigert," he said. "The very sight of that damned tray turns my stomach!"

He drank a cup of coffee at the little ornate desk in the corner of his sitting room, and then began to reckon his accounts. He first counted the roll of bills in his pocket—a little less than a thousand there. His private checking account was swept away with the rest. He flung the little leather-covered book with its lavender checks on the bed.

"Broke—like me!" he said with a harsh laugh.

The two big lavender cars would bring something—a pitifully small amount compared to their prodigal cost. All told, he would have six or seven thousand dollars.

Then, for an hour or more, Swanson figured his debts—the "little things" that he personally owed. Club bills, his hotel account, tailors' bills, the florist's bill—a myriad of bills which Harold J. regarded more or less as debts of honor. They, at least, he said to himself, would have to be paid. Sheets of paper were filled with figures while Harold J.'s tall form bent over the little desk.

"Bills—nothing but damned bills!" he finally exclaimed. There seemed to be no end of them.

It was the first time in the life of Harold J. Swanson that he ever had to total up what he owed the world. The total, which yesterday would have been dismissed as a *bagatelle*, staggered him. He would need—well, say, ten thousand. He rose from his desk and ordered Sweigert to bring round the car.

His appearance in the lobby of the Mohawk House brought a buzz of comment. There was no more kowtowing—no more obsequiousness—no more slavish adulation. They stared at Harold J., those who only a brief day or two ago had been proud to answer his nod. They stared with bovine curiosity, with pity, with malice. He endured the stares with dull submission.

A fallen emperor, he was, to be stared at, pointed at, whispered about, for the rest of his days. He visualized himself as a ragged old man—like Old Sears, who had once been rich and now haunted the hotel lobbies striving to sell stock. God! Not that—anything but that!

Marie greeted him joyfully. She was really fond of him, in her own queer way, and besides, his three days of silence had piqued her. She wondered for a moment how badly he was hit—it couldn't be so bad, because didn't he still have his cars and his suite at the Mohawk? He blurted out the news.

"I'm broke—done for!" he said.

"Why, I haven't enough cash to pay my tailor. And my hotel bill—God knows how I'll manage it!"

Marie's piquant features became a little bleak, and more than a little hard.

"You got the cars, ain't you?" she asked.

"Yes, but even the cars won't—Marie, I hate to ask—but, well, I've been good to you—Marie, I want ten thousand to get straightened out!"

The girl's eyes narrowed. Her face took on the shrewd, hard, bargaining look of her caste. She shook her head slowly.

"Nope!" she said. "I didn't think you was a piking Indian giver, Harold!"

"But, good God, girl! I gave it to you!"

"Certainly yuh gave it to me, and I'm gonna keep it. I gotta look out for myself, Harold!"

He crossed the room and seated himself near the window, looking out at the big lavender car and the silent chauffeur. He laughed a little mirthless laugh. Even in the old Swanson mansion, overrun with mangy foreigners, there was none so poor as he. In the cold light he looked older than the girl had ever seen him. A brief look of pity—of affection—crossed her face; then the hard, bartering look swept over her features again. Her time had come. She went to him.

"Harold, when I said I was goin' to keep it, I meant it, in a way," she said. "But I could see my way to lendin' you a little, if—well—if—"

"If what?" Harold J.'s voice was dull and listless.

"If we was only married!" The girl stopped his amazed outburst with a passionate plea. "I want to be married, Harold! I want to be sort of respectable, and looked up to a bit. I've often thought—if I only could be Mrs. Harold J. Swanson, how happy I'd be! I'd make some of these goody-goods who turn up their noses at me look sick! I'd—"

The girl went on and on, ringing her astounding proposition into Harold J.'s astounded ears. It was give and take.

He refused indignantly; she reminded him of his position—a veritable beggar at her feet. He cajoled; she hardened. She cajoled; he weakened. Finally he gave way with a great horse-laugh.

"I'll do it!" he said. "My God, what a joke—what a superb joke! The final fillip to turn the palates of these hicks—these jakes—these astonishing rubes! I'll do it! Come on, Marie! I'll do it now!"

He did it. Ere banking hours came to a close Harold J., with Marie beside him, entered the City Bank. Marie went to the teller's window.

"I'm Mrs. Harold J. Swanson now," she said, in her best society manner.

The teller gasped.

Old Vaness came from his private office. Harold J., ruddily amused, wearing his lavender boutonniere, greeted him jovially. The tableau halted Vaness in his tracks.

"Hello, Vaness!" said Harold J., in tones that drew the attention of everybody in the banking room. "Meet my wife—the new Mrs. Harold J. Swanson!"

Old Vaness's venomous look gave way before a horrid leer of pleasurable surprise—a new morsel, it was to the scandalmonger!

Marie took command of the big lavender speedster when they left the bank. She spoke to Sweigert with an air of authority. Sweigert answered respectfully, "Yes, madam!" It was Marie's crowning moment of triumph.

"Drive us up Main Street, Sweigert!" she ordered. "Stop at the florists'."

At the exclusive little shop which Harold J. had patronized she bought a huge corsage, elaborately arranged.

"Charge it to Mrs. Harold J. Swanson!" she ordered. There was a brief silence. Then the clerk said, pertly:

"Sorry, m'am! But Mr. Swanson's charge account has been closed."

"Damn it, I'll pay for it, then!" Marie flung a banknote on the counter and rushed out, bearing the corsage.

Harold J. sat in the car grinning an inane grin. His too blue, protuberant eyes were a bit too bright, like the eyes

of a man with fever. Marie seated herself beside him.

"The nerve of 'em!" she said. And then, after a little:

"Well, I got plenty. You was good to me, Harold—and I salted it. We can keep the cars—and Sweigert, too, I guess. He's sorta ornamental and gives a kind of an air to the turnout. Well—so I'm Mrs. Harold J. Swanson. Gee,

who'd a' thought it! Maybe you can take up some business, Harold—like genteel gamblin' or something like that!"

She chattered on. Harold J. said nothing. There was naught to be said. A new world was opening before him and it came to him poignantly that he was old—tired. Too old—too tired. . .



Dead Sea Fruit

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

TOGETHER in the desert we will reach
 For golden boughs and agate basins filled
 With silver coolness, telling over each
 Most sought-for miracle, until we build
 Anew the hanging gardens and their glooms
 Of harp-like cedars. Panting, we will run
 Through porphyry-paven courts and windy rooms
 Where we can rest unanxious of the sun.

Here is no tortured harvesting of men
 Threshed out in blood and sweat upon the sand.
 The terraces and columns rise again
 Soundlessly. . . . In the hollow of my hand,
 Behold the fallen house of one who knew
 The taste of tears from having dreamed too true!



THE fifth horseman of the Apocalypse: Hors de combat.



TOO many cooks spoil the police force.



Enchantment

By Carolyn Hall

MY songs float down the valley
Like the bells tied to the sheep,
For who can sing loud songs
When he is asleep?

My cardinals are dull birds;
Sunlight is soft as shade—
And never a person is blinded
By the color I have made.

I catch at the blue of dusk-fall,
And the tangled wool on the sheep,
And the little light of water rings,
But nothing that will keep.

And it is all the doing of you, Lost Boy,
What good for me to pretend?
None can break the dream you left
Or tell me of its end.

My songs float down the valley
Like the bells tied to the sheep,
For who can sing loud songs
When he is asleep?



THE only way to be happy is to live up to your lowest ideals.



A MAN is judged by his clothes. A woman, criticized.



Trickery

[A One-Act Play]

By Wilson Hicks

CHARACTERS:

A PAWNBROKER

A YOUNG MAN

A WATCH DOCTOR

The scene is the inside of a small pawnshop.

YOUNG MAN

(Who has just entered.) Hello.

PAWNBROKER

How are you this evening? What'll you have?

YOUNG MAN

I want to see some guns.

PAWNBROKER

There's a lot of them here. (They move to a showcase.) What kind?

YOUNG MAN

I want a revolver, about .38 caliber. (As he looks in the showcase the PAWNBROKER goes behind it.) I see you've got some automatic pistols.

PAWNBROKER

(Sliding back a door and reaching in.) You can see all I've got. Some of these have been here quite a while, but they're all good. (He places several of the weapons on a felt counter-piece.) Handling guns is a bad proposition.

YOUNG MAN

(Picking one up.) This is a nice one. How much?

PAWNBROKER

I'll make you a good price. (He ren-

ders first aid to a snag in a sleeve of his red-striped silk shirt, received on the showcase door.) As I say, handling guns is a bad proposition. Pawnbrokers hardly ever know where the ones they buy come from. We never know what's going to be done with them, either.

YOUNG MAN

That's right, I guess. Guns don't only bother you fellows, though. The law ain't so easy with people who carry concealed weapons.

PAWNBROKER

(With all the dignity he has at thirty years old.) I'm glad to hear you say that. It's good you know it.

(One at a time he passes the pieces in his stock before the YOUNG MAN's eyes. Although seeming to be fully Americanized, the PAWNBROKER obviously has lost none of the traits of the Hebrew race as a tradesman.)

YOUNG MAN

Some outlay here.

PAWNBROKER

(Suavely.) Tell me what you want a gun for and maybe I can help you pick it out.

YOUNG MAN

(Continuing to examine the firearms.) You've got a real collection.

(The WATCH DOCTOR, a lean, rusty old man, who has been peering into the innards of a timepiece, leaves his workbench at the front to turn on the electric window lights, utilizing the move for a look at the YOUNG MAN.)

PAWNBROKER

(Running a hand through wavy black hair.) What do you say? I know a good gat when I see one.

YOUNG MAN

(Tugging at his soiled brown cap.) It's a particular use I want a gun for.

(He squints at the PAWNBROKER with eyes swollen apparently from lack of sleep.)

PAWNBROKER

Well, now, what is it? Not to be inquisitive, but—

YOUNG MAN

I'm going to shoot someone. That's what guns are used for mostly nowadays, ain't it?

PAWNBROKER

Don't joke, fellow. There's been too many killings already. What's the idea, anyway?

YOUNG MAN

(Solemnly.) I'm not fooling. I'm going to shoot someone—my wife, if you must be in on it.

PAWNBROKER

(Laughing.) Of course, a man that plans murder always tells somebody about it first. If you like to joke about such a thing, though, we'll let it go at that. Now it's up to me whether you get a gun or not. I can sell you one if I want to, otherwise—

YOUNG MAN

I can get one some place else.

(The WATCH DOCTOR, for a better look at the YOUNG MAN, goes to a water-cooler at the rear.)

PAWNBROKER

(Jovially.) If I believed you I might cover you with one of these things until my repair man could call the police.

(Returning to his workbench, the WATCH DOCTOR finds renewed interest in the ailing horologe.)

YOUNG MAN

(Staidly.) If any was loaded you might do that, I guess. I don't think much would be done to me if you did have me arrested, though. You think I'm joking, and I could swear to the police I was.

PAWNBROKER

Oh, I don't see anything to arrest anybody for. You want to buy something—I want to sell something.

YOUNG MAN

And I've got the money.

PAWNBROKER

(Inspired.) It's time to get down to business. (He gingerly arranges the weapons.) My idea is to get rid of stock. Always buying, must sell. But say, won't you tell me what you want a gun for?

YOUNG MAN

Listen. (He digs his hands into pockets of a worn blue coat, bending his slender body over the showcase toward the PAWNBROKER, who makes a quizzical survey.) I'm at the point where I won't worry much about what happens to me. I'll have my round with the cops after what I'm going to do is over with.

PAWNBROKER

The boy talks like he means it!

(The WATCH DOCTOR agrees by picking away harder at a mainspring.)

YOUNG MAN

I do mean it. You may be the last man I'll talk to. I may put some lead in myself when I get through with her. (Slowly.) To tell the truth, I doubt if she's worth killing. But she's not worth living, either.

PAWNBROKER

(*Rather nervously.*) Why should a fellow like you want to kill anybody? What did she do to you?

YOUNG MAN

(*Vacantly.*) That's it—what did she do? (*He lights a cigarette, shifting his gaze suddenly from the burnt match to the PAWNBROKER.*) What hasn't she done! She's a rare bird; no brains at all. (*Smoke, blown downward, hangs for a moment in a sheet above the assortment of weapons.*) We've been married two years; had a good time until a couple of months ago. Then she got all high-toned. I wasn't good enough.

PAWNBROKER

The old stuff, friend. She started running around with other fellows, didn't she?

YOUNG MAN

Not only running around. She's stepping high, and thinks I don't know it. Just think of that—she believes I can't tell.

PAWNBROKER

A divorce ought to be easy.

YOUNG MAN

It wouldn't punish her. I want to do her up right. If I hadn't been good to her, and worked like the devil for her—

PAWNBROKER

But think what it is to kill a person!

YOUNG MAN

You've never been married, have you? You don't act like it.

PAWNBROKER

No, I haven't.

YOUNG MAN

Then get married. Go home some night and find your wife and a good-for-nothing dope merchant or somebody in the flat you're paying rent on. Let her beat it in the night with all the money you saved, leaving a note say-

S. S.—Sept.—6

ing if you was any kind of a man you'd doll up a bit for her sake. Imagine that! And me so crazy about her all the time I don't know what to do.

PAWNBROKER

You know what'll happen to you if you kill her. You'll go to the pen.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, I've talked about it enough. I want action. It'll all be over in a couple of hours from now. Somebody ought to be able to tell afterward why I did it. I ain't got no one to tell but you.

(*He drops his cigarette, crushing it out under foot, and hoists his trousers. The PAWNBROKER watches him thoughtfully, then idly picks up a blue-steel revolver, an elongated affair with black rubber handle. He cocks it, snaps the trigger.*)

PAWNBROKER

I bought this from the property man at police headquarters. It was taken off a tough gangster—Blondie the Toad. Remember him?

YOUNG MAN

Never heard of him.

PAWNBROKER

He was a stick-up man, safeblower, murderer. Did a lot of things and got away with them. Had the police fooled for years. Come here.

(*Emerging from behind the counter, the PAWNBROKER leads the YOUNG MAN to a point under a ceiling light, center.*)

See that? (*The revolver is turned so the light strikes it properly.*) See those little straight marks there, all in a row? Thirteen of them. That's how many people Blondie killed.

(*The YOUNG MAN takes the weapon, inspects it thoroughly. Handing it back, he goes to a counter opposite the firearms showcase and leans on it. The PAWNBROKER remains under the light.*)

Blondie got by a long time, but one

night he pulled a boner. I found out about him when I got this shooting iron. I like to know my stuff.

YOUNG MAN

If you're going to tell a story, I want to sit down.

(The PAWNBROKER directs the WATCH DOCTOR to provide a chair. The YOUNG MAN sits, removes his cap, exposing yellow ruffled hair. A man appears at the entrance, but, after glancing into windows which flank the doorway, passes on.)

PAWNBROKER

Blondie was crazy about a woman. She was about him, too, he thought. One night he went home to find his girl all wrapped up in the arms of his best pal. Blondie didn't say anything at first. He made things easier by asking the girl to fix a lunch. Pretty soon the girl and the pal thought the thing had blown over. Blondie made his pal fill up on stuff to eat, and liquor. Then he laughed and talked, told a naughty story or two. After a couple of hours Blondie thought things were about ready. He put his pal, who was feeling good by that time, in a chair in a corner of the room. He put the girl in the opposite corner. Then the son-of-a-gun pulled his revolver—this one right here—offered his "guests" another drink; made them take it. Then he told them in an hour he was going to bump them off. He did—a bullet in each of their heads. Blondie went to the chair. Died cursing everything and everybody.

YOUNG MAN

(Unshaken.) Served 'em right. They ought to have been shot.

(He rises, walks to the firearms show-case. The PAWNBROKER drops the arm holding Blondie's revolver, brushes perspiration from his forehead, places the weapon on the chair where the YOUNG MAN had sat. From the firearms show-case he picks up another, a small pearl-handled, nickel-plated one.)

PAWNBROKER

Look at this thing. It belonged to Mrs. Oscar Lanning Otis. Remember her?

YOUNG MAN

I never read the papers.

PAWNBROKER

Her husband was a rich clothing maker. They got along fine for years. She played society, made reform fights, and got to be well known. Then the old man got young ideas, and she found him one night in the lobby of a hotel with a chorus girl. When the old boy took sick not long after that, and was in bed, Mrs. Otis went in to see him. He was asleep. She acted like she was fixing the covers, and instead she poked this gun in his ribs and fired. When the cops got to her she stuck her fingers in the blood, looked at it and laughed, then turned the gun on herself. That's the way it is—they either kill themselves or go to the chair.

YOUNG MAN

(Stolidly.) One way is as good as another.

(He lights another cigarette, brushing ashes from his clothes with frigid care.)

PAWNBROKER

What do you think of that?

YOUNG MAN

I told you. One way is as good as another.

PAWNBROKER

(Exchanging the Otis weapon, which he puts on the chair with Blondie's, for a third one.) What do you say to this one?

YOUNG MAN

I guess I'd better be getting along.

PAWNBROKER

Don't hurry away.

YOUNG MAN

I don't know why all this story telling is going on, but if you're getting

any fun out of it, go ahead. I've got to get home pretty soon, though, to—

PAWNBROKER

(*A trifle flustered under an attempt to disguise the awareness that he must hasten.*) This gun was owned by a fellow about your age. (*It is a small automatic pistol.*) He worked nights and needed protection going home. He was a hard worker, crazy about his wife, too. One morning early he went home to find a man beating it out the back door. He killed his wife and barricaded himself in the house. The cops shot it out with him. He was torn to pieces almost by bullets.

YOUNG MAN

He was lucky not to have to bump himself off.

PAWNBROKER

If his wife had really done him wrong he might have had the unwritten law to help him. Even at that he probably would have just dwindled away the best part of his life in the pen. As it turned out, the fellow who went out the back door was the milkman. It was cold, and the fellow's wife had asked him in to get warm. A husband never knows for sure—

YOUNG MAN

Don't you worry. I know.

PAWNBROKER

Then I guess you've got your mind made up.

YOUNG MAN

(*Staunchly.*) I have.

PAWNBROKER

All right, kid. But you won't get me to sell you a gun. (*The third weapon is placed on the chair.*)

YOUNG MAN

(*Preparing to leave.*) I guess it's good-by to you, then.

(*The PAWNBROKER goes to the front of the store, where he begins to arrange suits on a rack.*)

PAWNBROKER

(*Turning suddenly.*) There isn't anything else you want to buy, is there?

YOUNG MAN

No. You won't sell me a gun. Why should I buy anything else? I'll go to another pawnshop, and I won't do so much talking the next time, either.

PAWNBROKER

Look over my stock. If you'll decide to put this shooting off, I'll give you anything in the store that don't cost over ten dollars.

YOUNG MAN

And then you could tip off the coppers! That'd be fine. I wouldn't have a chance.

PAWNBROKER

I give you my word there'll be nothing like that. On the square.

YOUNG MAN

What's the idea, then?

PAWNBROKER

(*Thoughtfully.*) What do you need? A new suit of clothes? A pair of shoes? A nice little watch? Do you play a musical instrument of any kind?

YOUNG MAN

I don't need anything.

PAWNBROKER

I've got some nice horns. Ever play one?

YOUNG MAN

I never will again, I guess. I used to. (*Brightening slightly.*) I know a little something about music. Say, why all this generosity? I never knew a guy—

PAWNBROKER

Now don't worry about that. You're a pretty fair sort of chap. Your looks make me think you might get somewhere some of these days. Not every man knows even a little bit about music. I want to do a fellow a good turn when I get a chance.

(He goes to a row of shelves behind the firearms showcase.)

YOUNG MAN

Luck to you. I'm leaving.

PAWNBROKER

Just a minute more. I want to show you something. (*In his hands is a cornet. The YOUNG MAN stops as he sees it.*) I got this only today from an old worn-out musician. It's a good one. You know something about music; can you play anything like this?

YOUNG MAN

(*There is a hint of rising interest.*) I could, once.

PAWNBROKER

Take a look at it. It's a wonder.

YOUNG MAN

(*Simply.*) It does look like a good one.

PAWNBROKER

Look it over. Try it. Just feel it. I don't know anything about a horn, but this one sets in your hands just like it wants to be played.

YOUNG MAN

(*Taking the cornet.*) It's all right. Works easy. (*He looks at the instrument as if with revived fondness.*) When I first met my wife—

PAWNBROKER

Yes? Go to it. (*Briskly arranging the YOUNG MAN's hands in playing position.*) I wish I could do something with music. Great stuff. A man don't know what he misses—

YOUNG MAN

(*Gravely.*) I don't believe I can play one now. I've about forgotten all I ever knew. (*His lips tremble.*) My hands haven't been on one of these for a long time.

PAWNBROKER

Go ahead and try it. You won't bother anybody. Play soft.

YOUNG MAN

(*With a brief smile.*) Ain't it a

beauty! Say, I wish I'd kept on taking lessons.

PAWNBROKER

I thought you'd like it.

YOUNG MAN

Yes, it's all right. (*His voice quavers.*) I used to be crazy about playing. (*His head bowed over the instrument, he fingers it caressingly.*) My wife used to make the piano talk, and I bore down on a horn.

PAWNBROKER

(*Triumphantly.*) Go on, friend.

YOUNG MAN

It won't hurt to have one last play!

(*The YOUNG MAN moistens his lips in horn-blower's fashion. Clearing his throat, he raises the cornet, wiggling it so the mouthpiece is properly placed. He braces himself, produces a trial note. He is engrossed. The PAWNBROKER is radiant.*)

I don't know any new pieces. What'll you have?

PAWNBROKER

Oh, any old thing.

(*The YOUNG MAN begins on a once popular ballad. He loses himself completely with the first few bars. A false note here and there does not abash him. He swings into the air with superb exhalation, while the PAWNBROKER looks on with delight. The WATCH DOCTOR leaves his workbench and edges to a point of vantage behind a nearby counter, where he feigns the arrangement of a tray of watches. The YOUNG MAN, oblivious, plays on. At the end of the first number there are tears in his eyes. He lowers the instrument for an instant but then, with a sort of blind passion, he readjusts it, and sways into another lovesong of yesterday. The PAWNBROKER strikes the pose of a victor. The YOUNG MAN's face is red now; his chest is heaving under more than the mere strain of blowing a horn. Tears splash off the cornet to his coat-front. In the middle of the second number, having risen to the heights, he breaks into sobs.*)

YOUNG MAN

(Shaking his head.) Oh—

PAWNBROKER

(Patting him on the back.) There now, that's too bad. I didn't aim to have you do such a thing.

YOUNG MAN

(Chokingly.) Don't give me any of that. (He brushes the tears away with the back of a dirty hand.) Fine guy, ain't I? (He gulps, then moves slowly to the firearms counter, where he deposits the horn.) I couldn't help it.

PAWNBROKER

(Consolingly.) That's all right. You've got music in you. I can tell.

YOUNG MAN

I've got to leave.

PAWNBROKER

(Picking up the cornet.) What do you say to our little bargain? Are you on?

YOUNG MAN

(Examining a wet spot on one of his lapels.) On?

PAWNBROKER

Yes, Won't you take me up? The horn is to be yours. You'll make a musician some day.

(Looking up, the YOUNG MAN notices for the first time that the WATCH DOCTOR has been an onlooker, and sees also that he is chuckling to himself.)

YOUNG MAN

A fellow is a fool sometimes. I said I used to play. I haven't done it since my wife got sick of my cornet a year after we started going together. By the time we got married she wouldn't play the piano for me any more. She said she decided she didn't like small town stuff.

PAWNBROKER

Forget that, I'll—

YOUNG MAN

(Again glancing at the WATCH DOCTOR, who is still smiling.) Forget it

nothing! That's the way she's done me all along. Always small town stuff—always not good enough for her.

PAWNBROKER

Let me wrap the cornet up for you. Take it home and practice tonight. Then come back here tomorrow.

(The PAWNBROKER takes the instrument behind the counter opposite the firearms showcase and proceeds to wrap it. The YOUNG MAN frowns as he once more looks at the WATCH DOCTOR, who ducks his head. The YOUNG MAN takes out a soiled handkerchief and wipes his face. Then he takes out a cigarette.)

YOUNG MAN

You needn't wrap that up. It won't do any good.

PAWNBROKER

I'm just about through now. (In his haste his fingers get tangled in the string.) It's about ready for you.

(The YOUNG MAN, standing by the firearms showcase, views the outlay of weapons. He sees the three which the PAWNBROKER had placed on the chair opposite. Pulling his coat about him, he eyes the PAWNBROKER swiftly, gauges the distance to the entrance, then, seizing the first weapon from the firearms showcase that he can get his hands on, he rushes to the door. The PAWNBROKER, still winding string, looks up to see the fleeing YOUNG MAN. The WATCH DOCTOR fumbles one of the timepieces in his surprise, and it drops. As he leaves the entrance the YOUNG MAN turns around, flourishes the weapon so those inside may see, then, thrusting it under his coat, dashes across the street. The PAWNBROKER stands transfixed, the partly wrapped cornet before him. There is a pause.

WATCH DOCTOR

Well, I guess you'll have a story to tell about that gun before long.

(He stoops to recover the watch he had let fall.)

CURTAIN

The Hired Girl

By Edwin H. Blanchard

I

WHEN Hester Walker came to the Penfields' to work, she had just passed her twenty-sixth birthday. From the time that she was fourteen she had done all of a woman's work on a farm, and had taken a hand at heavier work as well. She had washed and cooked and churned and cleaned house; she had as well ridden the hay rake, or milked the six cows that her father kept. All this she had done without complaint; she had been brought up to work, and was happy in it. But when her father had brought home a new wife, and this woman had made it plain that there were to be radical changes in the household economy of the Walkers, Hester had packed up her few possessions in an old suitcase, and had come to Rome, six miles from her home, to look for a place.

In the living room of the Penfields' house, Hester had sat on the very edge of her chair and listened calmly as Mrs. Penfield outlined what she expected of a hired girl. Only her eyes—a clear blue against her florid complexion—showed a slight animation as Mrs. Penfield asked her if she was fond of children.

"Yes'm, I am," Hester hastened to say.

"I want someone I can trust to leave the children with," Mrs. Penfield went on.

"You can trust me, ma'am," Hester assured her. "I'd take as good care of them as if they were my own."

Mrs. Penfield seemed convinced; she rose and led the way to the bedroom that Hester was to have, her silk petticoat rustling pleasantly in Hester's

ears. At the door of the room she stood aside to let Hester pass.

"You just put your suit-case down," Mrs. Penfield was saying, "and we'll go down and see about supper."

While serving table that night, Hester saw the rest of the family; J. W., the head of the family, large, bald-headed, with a moustache that strayed down over his mouth, speaking only in monosyllables; Horatio, the oldest boy, a sanguine and restless twelve-year-old; Madeline, a girl of ten, with a fragile beauty that had been her mother's before her; and Morrell, seven years old, an engaging boy, a little petulance in his expression.

During this first meal Hester was somewhat abashed: but she listened with one ear while Mrs. Penfield's cool voice ran on through a catalogue of the day's minor happenings. As she washed the dishes after supper, she was reminded of that other kitchen she had lately left, and of the view through its window of the south meadow, and a pang of homesickness came to trouble her for a moment. But it was quickly gone; and later, as she walked about her room, putting away her clothes and rearranging the contents of the bureau drawers, she felt that she had come to a good home, and was going to be contented. She spread a clean towel over the top of her bureau, and in the center, propped against the bottom of the mirror, she put a daguerrotype of her mother. Little by little, she told herself, she would get things—pictures, and vases, and the like—that would make this room her own.

Quickly her life became one of placid routine; there was little difference in the days that followed. At half-past six

the little alarm clock that Mrs. Penfield had given her went off with a tinny ring; Hester got up, started the kitchen fire, and began to get breakfast ready. The oatmeal, put on the night before, only required to be heated; there would be eggs to scramble, and bacon to fry, or sausages and liver to cook.

At a little after seven, Mrs. Penfield, her hair still done up in curl-papers, looked in at the kitchen door, a dressing gown hugged around her slim body. There was a stereotyped exchange of words between the two women.

"Is everything all right, Hester?" Mrs. Penfield always asked.

"Yes'm. But this fire doesn't seem to draw very well."

"No, that's a fact. We need a new range."

Then Mrs. Penfield would withdraw, not to reappear until the whole family came to the breakfast table, between half-past seven and quarter of eight. The children were sometimes a few minutes late, but J. W. was always in his chair promptly at the half hour, his face shining from a clean shave, looking up at Hester as she brought in his breakfast to say, "Well, what is it this morning? Something good, I hope."

After the breakfast dishes were done, there was dusting and sweeping and bed-making to keep Hester busy until it was time for dinner. She went about her tasks slowly and capably, comfortable in the thought that she had ample time to do her work. After dinner there was ironing or cooking or mending to do. It was generally four o'clock before Hester found a chance to sit down. And then, when she was sitting in the chair by the kitchen window, her eyes on the street outside, Madeline would come in with two or three other little girls behind her and would plead, "Hester, make us some cambric tea, please. Please, Hester."

Hester would bring out a small table from the kitchen closet, and make tea for the children. Then she would sit in the window, rocking back and forth in her chair, delighted at the mimic

gentility of these little girls. Often Horatio came rushing in, leaving the doors wide open behind him, breathlessly demanding of Hester if she knew where his cap, or his baseball bat, or his knife was. Or it would be Morrell, his lips pouted out a bit, his elbows on her knees, asking her over and over again, "What can I do now? What can I do now, Hester?" She would take him up in her lap, and tell him stumbly a story woven out of her memory; but always before the end her invention failed and the story came to some lame end. Morrell would squirm out of her arms with a reproachful "That's no good."

After the children had been put to bed, the house became strangely quiet to Hester. She sat by the window in the kitchen, or in her room, reading the paper, until her head began to nod. She folded the paper carefully, against its use as lining for the pantry shelves. This done, she undressed slowly, and after saying her prayers climbed into bed.

Week after week slipped by, and one season into another; and no week or season came to have any special significance for Hester. She was able to save a few dollars a month out of the money that Mrs. Penfield paid her, and this she deposited regularly in the bank as a provision for her old age. It never occurred to her to look back, after that first day, to her life on the farm with any regret. She was comfortable where she was, and liked her work. Nor did it occur to her to look into the future. If she had ever thought of marriage, it had been long ago. Slow-witted as she had been, she had understood what her father meant when he had said so often, "It's lucky for you your face ain't your fortune." Heavy and slow of movement, with a flat characterless face, she had stayed at home when the other girls were being taken on buggy rides, or to dances at the grange hall. She had always been ill at ease with the men who had come at haying time; she had never been able to follow their witticisms or their clumsy allusions.

She withdrew into the serenity that came from work; and only her solicitude for the cats or the chickens around the farm hinted at any tenderness at all in her prosaic character.

Out of the day, those hours just before supper came to have an unusual significance for Hester. The children came to her when they were tired or hungry, when anything went wrong, and Hester dropped whatever she was doing to listen to their talk. Mrs. Penfield had come to depend more and more on Hester where the children were concerned, and the children in turn had come to accept her unquestioningly. Whenever she went down-town, she brought back peppermint wafers, or ribbon candy for the children, and when she cooked, she always made special cookies for Horatio and Madeline, or saved an oddly twisted doughnut for Morrell.

Morrell had somehow reached Hester's affections as neither of the other children had. Horatio was gruffly disdainful of all displays of emotion; there was something of aloofness in Madeline; but Morrell, however petulant or mischievous he might be, came to Hester instinctively as the person who would save him from punishment. He got behind her a half dozen times during an afternoon, loosened her apron strings, and laughed when the apron fell to the floor. But Hester never went further than, "Now, Morrell, you know your mother wouldn't like for you to do that." He could wheedle anything out of Hester—a nickel for candy, the top of the bread pan to use for a shield in his jousts against an imaginary enemy in the back yard, a warm doughnut, a piece of bread and butter with sugar on it.

She knew that Horatio and Madeline were outgrowing her; they laughed at her privately, she knew. The time would come when Morrell, too, would realize that she was only a hired girl; there was already a discernible difference in their relations. Morrell was twelve now and in the seventh grade in school. He was continually asking her

questions that he had had in school.

"I'll bet you can't guess what the capital of New Hampshire is," he would cry.

"Law, what notions you get into your head," Hester would say. "How should I know?"

Question after question he put to her, and when she laughed and shook her head, he seemed incredulous.

"Don't you really know what they are?" he would demand. "Oh, you're fooling me."

Later she would hear his voice as he spoke to his mother, insistent and earnest:

"Hester doesn't even know what the capital of New Hampshire is. Honest she doesn't. Honest."

And finally Mrs. Penfield's voice, hushing the boy.

Little by little Morrell grew away from her that year. There was the first time that he refused to sit on her lap.

"Come, sit on my lap and rest on me, Morrell," she had said.

"You must think I'm a kid," he answered, scorn in his eyes.

He was in and out of the kitchen as much as ever, but he came, not to listen to her stories or to stand fascinated as she rolled out cooky dough, but to look for a mislaid cap, or book. He no longer teased her as he had; he was more reserved with her.

II

ONE afternoon, on her way down-town to the bank, Hester turned out of her usual route into Winter street. Half way down she noticed the auctioneer's red flag in front of the Ballard house, and through the windows she caught a glimpse of people moving about within.

Impelled by idle curiosity, she went in, and listened idly as a number of chairs and tables and kitchen utensils were auctioned off. Just as she was about to leave, the auctioneer lifted up a cage, stripped it of its covering, and held up to view a frightened canary. There was silence. No one wanted this bird. Hester heard her voice, as if by

some inner prompting, saying, "A dollar and a half!" Someone else offered two dollars; Hester went to two dollars and a half. There were no more bids. The canary was hers.

Several women in the crowd around the raised platform turned and looked at her curiously as she came forward to get it; confusedly Hester took the cage from the auctioneer, covered it with its cloth, and moved toward the door. She had had no intention of buying the bird; somehow the sight of all those people taking one glance at the bird and then looking away indifferently had impelled her to act. She hitched the cage up under her arm and started home.

When she was home again, she put the cage on the kitchen table and took off the cloth. The bird fluttered wildly down to the bottom of the cage.

"Scared, ain't you?" asked Hester, her face close to the wires of the cage. "You mustn't be scared. No."

She poked a finger inside the cage, but the bird made no move to come to her. It was thus that Mrs. Penfield found her when she came out into the kitchen.

"What in the world, Hester—" she began.

"I've bought me a bird, Mis' Penfield. It's all right to hang him here in the window, ain't it?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so," Mrs. Penfield admitted, "but I can't for the life of me see what you want with it."

Hester put a screw in over the kitchen window, and hung the cage where it would be in plain sight as she worked. Day by day she tried to win the confidence of the bird. She tried to purse up her lips into a whistle, or to get him to peck at her finger. By degrees he came to know her, until one day she was able to slip her hand into the cage and take him up, and feel the sudden pounding of his heart against her fingers. He began to sing more. Hester told herself that the bird knew her the moment she came into the kitchen. She minded less now the thought of the

children growing away from her; this was something all her own.

She told the bird all her plans. "To-day I'm going to make bread," or "I'm going upstairs and make the beds. I won't be long." Mrs. Penfield told her that it was silly to attach so much importance to a bird, and sometimes when Mrs. Penfield came into the kitchen unexpectedly Hester tried to pretend that she had been talking to herself and not to the bird. Whenever she was alone in the house in the afternoon, Hester closed all the windows and doors of the kitchen and let the bird out of the cage for half an hour or more.

Hester stayed with the Penfields for nearly two years after she bought the canary. One night at supper J. W. announced casually to his family that he had been invited to go into partnership with a Jonathan Christy, one of the most prominent lawyers in Portland. There were discussions of this invitation for a few days; Mrs. Penfield told Hester that they were going to leave Rome, and asked her if she would like to go with them. Hester decided that she preferred to stay near her old home. She would never go back to the farm, but she could not bear the thought of leaving its neighborhood. She was given a letter of reference by Mrs. Penfield, and when the Penfields left for Portland, Hester went to work for the Clearwaters.

It was different at the Clearwaters'; there were no children, and Mrs. Clearwater was austere and distant, vitally concerned only with several clubs that she belonged to. She did none of the housework herself, and came into the kitchen only to make suggestions about meals. For a while Hester missed the Penfields, but the feeling passed. The bird hung by the kitchen window as it had at the other house; Mrs. Clearwater never passed the cage without looking at the bird suspiciously and a bit contemptuously.

Lines had come in Hester's face, and she had grown heavier in figure. She was slipping into middle age without

ever having had any youth. No man had ever looked at her with desire. The children that she had slaved for, worked her hands to the bone for, had turned away from her, and laughed at her, and had probably forgotten her by this time. All that she had in the world, she told herself in a burst of maudlin self-pity, was this bird. She put her face close to the wires of the cage.

"Dick! Dick!" she called.

The bird hopped over jerkily, his head cocked on one side.

A December morning, not long after this, Hester came down stairs, shook down the fire, put on fresh coal, and went to the cage to take the cover off. The bird lay in the bottom of the cage, his two claws sticking up stiffly.

"Dicky, Dicky!" Hester called.

But the bird did not move. She had never seen him act that way. She opened the door of the cage and picked him up. He was cold. She held him clutched in her hand. She must find something to put him in. In the back of the kitchen closet she found an old candy box with a little tissue paper still left in it. She started to wrap the bird carefully in the tissue paper. She looked up as Mrs. Clearwater came into the kitchen.

"Hester," asked Mrs. Clearwater, "is there enough of that—" Her eyes fell on the box in Hester's hand. "What in the world are you doing?"

"My bird's dead, Mis' Clearwater." "Well, that's too bad, Hester." Her tone was one of polite distress. "But what are you going to do with that box?"

"I was goin' to bury him in the back yard. I could put up a piece of board or somethin'. I wisht I'd thought of a good name for him."

She looked up at Mrs. Clearwater; a little frown had come on her brow.

"That's silly, Hester, to make all that fuss over a bird."

"I've had him an awful long time, Mis' Clearwater."

"I know, but that doesn't make any difference. A bird is only a bird. You let me have it, and Mr. Clearwater will attend to it."

Hester hesitated. She had wanted to bury the bird in the back yard, and stick a shingle up over the place. But Mrs. Clearwater thought she was silly. She didn't want to be silly. Mrs. Clearwater must know best. She handed the box over to her.

"Is there enough of that roast of beef to serve cold for dinner?"

"Yes'm," Hester answered, "I think so. I'll go look."

She walked into the pantry, and Mrs. Clearwater, standing by the kitchen table with the old candy-box in her hand, could hear her moving around, her shoes slip-slopping against the oil-cloth on the pantry floor. . .



A Song of Snares

By A. Newberry Choyce

THE pity, the pity of trapped wild things!
Singing-birds netted and little clipped wings;
Little cubs stolen out of a lair
And gold lions broken by night in a snare;
And silver fish lifted out of the sea,
And a little lad confined under a tree.

The Baby Vamp

By F. Gould

I

BRUCE glimpsed her first from the steps of the Tiger Inn, and wondered what she saw in that ass Fernstaat. There were others, equally heart-whole and fancy-free, on whom she might have been turning the glory of her eyes—himself, for instance. From the porch he was uncertain as to her eyes, but his own followed her back appreciatively as she turned in next door at the Colonial. He became conscious of the sudden necessity for meeting her face to face. With Bruce to think was to act, and the tea-dance which was holding forth frolicsomeness offered excuse enough.

He found her as he had known he would, surrounded by a bunch of guys—upper classmen, mostly, with a sprinkling of sophomores—and was astonished at her deft method of handling them. Fernstaat was there, of course, cynically urbane, and Gale, president of the Senior class; Baldy Ryons and Bob Cotton, pulling their usual Southern line, and "Bets" Vandell, whose merry fiddle swayed the Triangle orchestra. Athletes and parlor snakes, highbrows and low—she gave them all the same amount of attention, bordering on condescension.

Bruce, meeting her eyes across the porch was conscious of a shock. He had imagined them limpid and brown, rather appealing; or perhaps the deep-fringed innocent blue of the baby vamp. Instead they were small, slanting and green; yet oddly attractive. They seemed to go with the mahogany hair that showed here and there under a trim violet hat.

Before he could meet her she was

swept away into the mazes of the dance. He lounged in the doorway watching her ankles as they flashed back and forth. They were "speaking" ankles, to say the least, and rather a great deal of them was displayed, it seemed to Bruce. A thrill ran through him as her eyes met his again. She flashed a smile at him over her partner's shoulder, a provocative smile that seemed to dare him; unhesitatingly he cut in on her.

They danced together in silence, and in perfect accord. He drew her closer and could feel her heart leap to his.

Suddenly Bruce felt old and sophisticated. Love had come to him at last. Not the lukewarm flirtation of a summer pastime, but the Real Thing—something shaking, heady! He deftly eluded the pursuing Fernstaat and drew her swiftly out on the stone terrace. Oblivious of surrounding groups, he smiled down at her masterfully. (Secretly he thought he was "getting by" wonderfully). She returned his smile with a crooked one of her own that caught his heart and tossed it, floundering, into his throat.

"Of course you know it isn't done," she said, "I've never even met you."

"We're even there," he shot back at her. "I don't even know your name."

And then he blushed at his own conceit in assuming that she had heard of his.

As a matter of fact she had, and had discussed him very thoroughly with her roommate only two days before. She had expected to find him charming—even masterful, perhaps—but this bold audacity exceeded her wildest dreams. It would be something to tell the girls, she thought! But her demure reply gave no clue to her thought. Fernstaat was

bearing down upon them and she wanted to see more of this wonderful boy.

"Let's dance," she said swiftly, and swung off into his arms again.

For the first time Bruce blessed the torrential downpour that had made the race with Harvard impossible. He was suddenly grateful for the impulse which had led him to prefer the secluded porch of the Tiger Inn to the damp shore of the lake and the race. He thought, happily, that fate was with him.

As the dance progressed he alternately cursed and blessed the cut-in system. His nerves were on edge with the uncertainty of it. At last he found himself temporarily alone with her.

"I like you," he asserted boldly—"more than anyone I've ever met. There's—something *different* about you."

She smiled and wondered vaguely why he used such a stale line. His next remark rather startled her.

"I've a car," he said hurriedly, "We could slip out quietly and take a ride. There'd be time to take you to a little inn I know of—and we could motor back in time for the singing."

"There's the Triangle Show to-night," she faltered uncertainly.

Bruce overruled that objection swiftly.

"Doesn't begin until nine—loads of time," he insisted. He bent his earnest young face to hers—

"Ah—*do!*" he pleaded—"We may never see each other again."

Stealthily they made the break for the car—successfully, too, and as they purred up Prospect street the sun came out and shone down through the wet leaves, dappling the road.

To the left they swung out over the bridge, and Bruce felt suddenly that it was good to be young and care-free and go bowling along a wet road that gleamed in the late afternoon sun. The smell of spring filled his nostrils—the sodden fragrance of wet bloom—the perfume of the girl beside him. Because he was young and happy and full

of the joy of living, he kissed her; and because he was good to look upon and it was spring, she kissed him back.

Then and there it began, as so many other romances have begun. Dinner at a garish little roadside inn, forgetful of too bright lights and noise, then home again, under a sunset sky. The spires of Princeton showed weird against a rosy background. He turned to the girl beside him. (Her name, he had discovered, was Lois.)

"Do you want to go back?"

She shook her head. The glamor of the sunset held her. The air was like *Lacrima Christi*.

Swiftly he turned the car into a road leading along the shore of the lake. He turned to her earnestly:

"I suppose you think I'm an awful doodle and all that," he began somewhat haltingly—"but—honestly—you don't know what to-day has meant to me. Yesterday I was discouraged and alone, sore as a crab, because I didn't know a girl I cared enough for to ask down for houseparty. When I saw you going up the street with Fernie, I knew, sorta, that you were *the* girl."

"I know," she said softly, as if in him she, too, had recognized *the* man.

"And I wondered how you came with such a bird as Fernie."

"He's my cousin," she explained.

"Oh! Then you aren't—you aren't—oh, *you* know—" he finished desperately.

"No—we aren't," she assured him.

The fact that he was her cousin explained why she had felt no remorse in slipping away. Sudden suspicion seized Bruce.

"You—you aren't just like all the rest of 'em?"

"Rest of what?" she wanted to know.

"Prom-trotters. You—you meant what you said back there, didn't you?"

"Goose!" she smiled at him.

They had stopped the car under a tree. Here in the woods dusk had descended; the trees dripped heavily. Darkness and—save that steady dripping—silence. In the distance a clock chimed eight.

"Can't you hear dem bells—
Can't you hear dem bells—"
hummed Bruce softly.

His arm edged its sure way along the back of the seat. He bent closer—her face upturned to his.

"Kiss me," she whispered.

II

It was a quarter of five by Bruce's wrist-watch when the train slowed down at the Morristown station. His heart thumped wildly as he scanned the station platform for Lois. He had visioned her in white with a flower-covered shade hat. She would be reclining gracefully against the cushions of a limousine and he would leap to greet her.

Instead, after the fashion of the modern day, it was she who leaped to greet him. Trim and self-possessed in sport silk of a vivid green, she led the way to a cocky little roadster, which throbbed impatiently.

"Love me?" she smiled up at him in greeting.

"You bet! Gosh," he added admiringly, "You're looking great."

"Feel great. Get by your exams?"

"Guess so. Say—Lois—I've got a confession to make. I feel like an awful fish, but I knew it'd be all right with you."

Lois turned the car in at a gryphon-guarded gateway. Through the trees, a house gleamed white in the distance.

"Shoot!" she said inelegantly.

"You've heard me speak of my brother Tom—class of fourteen—he's a prince. Well, he's got a job in Newark—factory job—and I asked him out for this week-end. I wanted you to meet him and I've pulled such a line about you that he's crazy to see you. And I thought—" shyly his eyes sought the Tiger Inn pin that clasped her tie—"I thought it'd be all right."

"Fine!" agreed Lois. "Here we are. Make a hit with the family, old dear. It pays."

The two days that followed were veiled in a rosy haze, and Bruce floated

through space. From the first he liked Lois' father—big and white-haired and a keen conversationalist. He was not so sure of the mother. He could feel her appraising him coldly, and knew that she distrusted him. But Lois—there was a girl!

Radiant, sparkling, she rode with him in the morning over the wooded Jersey hills, matched his game of tennis with a shrewd one of her own, and danced away the evenings in his arms. This was living, Bruce told himself repeatedly. It was good to get up in the morning to begin the day with her—good to go to bed at night and think—and think.

He told her so that first evening in the shadows of a rose garden—and tore her hair-net in the telling.

There were other guests over the week-end, a half dozen young people who arrived in motors for the occasion of a dance at the Country Club. Lois and he drove together to meet his brother.

Tom Spalding had let himself in for this particular week-end for three reasons. First, because he was not otherwise engaged; second, because Morristown was nearer than his mother's place at Stockbridge; third, because he was rather interested in this girl who seemed to have swept brother Bruce off his feet. He was prepared to be bored, and it was a pleasant shock to find his hostesses charming, several pretty girls among the guests, and his host's private stock excellent.

"You're some picker Bruce, old kid," he said that first evening, struggling with his tie.

Bruce, busy with his shirt studs, nodded enthusiastically.

III

THE car slowed down, jerked—stopped in the shadow of a big tree. The girl sat quiet, with nerves taut, waiting for her cue. A pale moon, sifting its light through the trees, caressed the softness of her hair, her neck. The man spoke.

"Peach of a night."

"Marvelous."

"Don't you feel somehow, on a night like this, that 'the world goes mad?'"

His arm slipped cautiously around the seat. The girl drew away.

"Please—I—I suppose you think I'm crazy to come out here like this? You don't think I'm *awful*?"

"I think you're adorable, Lois; I'd like to take you and run off with you to a desert island. Keep you to myself always. I'd like to kiss that enchanting mouth of yours until you cry—cry—and then—"

"And then—?" she breathed.

"I'd dry your tears. But we can't have what we want—"

"No?" Her voice was sad. (Inwardly she was thinking how crude he

was—why didn't he bring things to the point?)

"Unless—"

"Unless—what?" she urged him on.

"Unless we take it!" (Poor little girl he thought, he mustn't frighten her. She was so timid.)

His arm went around her, and as she put up her face, she visioned clearly—a spring night, trees dripping rain, a boy's eager love making.

She upturned the full power of her eyes on the man next to her.

"Kiss me—Tom," she said.

IV

BUT the boy Bruce was not idle. He was signing up for the November prom with a blonde from Birmingham.



Beauty Is Torment

By Dorothy Dow

*TWILIGHT and remembering
are the most beautiful things in the world—:
twilight . . . and remembering . . . and you.
And all three can make my heart
a hurt thing that shudders
away from itself.
I have been stabbed by the moon—
and a distant sea
has beaten my longing against its cliffs.
But the thought of yesterday
has made my heart a still thing
that cries to God,
"How long shall this agony last?"*



Fool's Paradise

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

I

MILDRED POMEROY, at the very moment when all possible scruples and misgivings would naturally have been silenced, heard the aggressive voice of her common sense hammering out a command. She tried not to listen; she clung doggedly to Fleet and, pressing her face against his, attempted to drown her reason, to scuttle it for good and all under the surge of emotion. But still her head reverberated to that voice of authority. She was powerless to stop her ears.

Suddenly she realized that she had freed herself from the man and was facing him at arm's-length. She gave him a long look of sorrowful tenderness. He was staring at her in obvious perplexity, at a loss to explain the abrupt breaking-off of the embrace.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I'm too practical for a fool's Paradise, after all."

She smiled and shook her head. Then, turning away from him, she sank down on the divan, arranging the pillows behind her head deftly.

Leaning back, she glanced up at him with a searching scrutiny.

"Sit down—here," she patted the upholstered seat, "while I explain."

He threw himself down beside her and grasped one of her hands.

"What under the sun—?" he wanted to know in injured tones.

"You don't think, do you, that it could ever be anything but a fool's Paradise?" she asked brusquely.

"I don't see what's wrong with a fool's Paradise," he parried.

"It's not a question of right or wrong. It's a question of the *sensible* thing."

"Oh, my Lord!" he groaned. "Who wants to be sensible at a time like this?"

"I'm sure I don't, George." She was unperturbed. "But my nature happens to be stronger than my desires."

"Since when?" he shot at her.

"Since—," she hesitated and looked at her watch—, "since about five-fifteen this afternoon. It's now just five twenty-two."

He refused to greet this as an amusing come-back. He hung his head sulkily and looked down at his legs.

She laughed.

"Ah—you're unique, George. Here I sit, hating myself for wounding you; and all the time I know you have the sort of skin that heals over-night."

"You'd so much rather I went around dripping blood over everything for the rest of my life," he told her melodramatically. "You don't want me to get over it."

"No, I don't like the idea of an over-night cure. I think it's unfair, since my own ailment's going to be chronic." She sighed. "You believe I'm jilting you cold-bloodedly. As a matter of fact, it's a renunciation on my part. The people we give up on those grounds stick like burrs."

"Then why try it?" he could still plead.

"Because I adore you," she returned frankly. "I'm determined that you shall stick in my poor flesh till I die. My only chance of an effective cure would be to marry you. It wouldn't take me long then to pry your stickers loose. But I much prefer discomfort to disillusion."

She smiled sadly:

"You're puzzled to the last degree."

You don't realize what a trying, nerve-racking husband you'd make. You are free now and you dodge creditors and responsibilities and decent duties very prettily. It's a delight to watch you. It wouldn't be half so pleasant to keep pace with you. In six months I should be aged, and you'd leave me by the wayside, you know you would. There I'd be, wise—oh, fearfully wise!—and alone and quite cured. Do you think I'd be sentimental about you then? You wouldn't be a poignant memory, George. You are just that—*so* poignant—today. I mean to keep you so."

She got to her feet and, taking his chin in one hand, forced him to meet her eyes.

"It's true, isn't it? What I've said is true, George?"

He said nothing, but attempted petulantly to wriggle out of her grasp.

"I love that small-boy pout," she murmured. "You'll always wear it in my sentimental visions. Isn't it fortunate that I *can* make a common-sense get-away and still be a romantic fool? I shall probably cry my eyes out on the day you marry Virginia."

"*Virginia!*" he protested with weary exasperation.

"Yes—Virginia. Of course you'll marry Virginia," she informed him. "You'll make tracks for her house the minute you leave mine. I haven't a doubt she'll take you. And I'll take poor Robert Banks. I shall be tumbling head-foremost over your horizon tonight, at dinner time; and you won't even hear the splash I make."

She put her hands on the man's shoulders.

"Please kiss me now, George. I need that, too, for my store of memories."

This time she made no attempt at resistance when he took her in his arms. She was already reckoning the moment as a part of the irrecoverable past from which she had been haled by her indomitable common sense.

II

"GEORGE FLEET is the kind that makes a woman want to be a fool," Mildred

had announced, some weeks before, to Virginia Haire. Well, she had done her level best and at the last moment she had tottered back to safety. The summer season ended with her marriage to the faithful and respected Robert Banks. It had been for Virginia to don the cap and bells as Fleet's wife; she had the faculty of plunging hot-foot into folly without being in the least aware of her movements.

Mildred had known all along that she was trying to push herself into a crazy alliance; she had not been able to lose her head. She'd been too conscious that she *wanted* to be a fool; Virginia hadn't thought at all—she had just been the genuine article from the start. She had fallen into Fleet's trap. Mildred's trap had been of her own making; she had shut her eyes and resolved to walk into it and spring it—and then of a sudden she discovered she had stepped back.

Fleet was the queer sort that men consider insignificant and that women adore. His fellow-males had a humorous, indulgent pity for him. He was—well—all right in a way; and then again, he was all wrong, too. The point was, he didn't have the hard cash half the time to pay his sporting debts, so he received about as much consideration as a terrier at the others' heels. Physically, too, Fleet aroused a certain good-natured contempt in the more sleekly cushioned of his sex. With him, excess in everything was the rule. He showed it in his appearance. He was thin, nervous, irritable—all bad signs. His skin seemed drawn tight over his bones, for example—and his eyes looked as if he was eaten up with some kind of fever. Yes—he was a gentleman, good family, good looks, too, in a weak sort of way. He'd best watch out, though. He might go seedy any day; and when a man gets to that point he wakes up some morning and finds he's been thrown out on the ash-can.

It was precisely the qualities in Fleet censured by the men that fascinated the women. He was irresponsible, perverse—and extravagantly lovable. Thinking of him, one gave free rein to all sorts of

preposterous, romantic notions. He seemed the one survival of the type celebrated by the dear old French yellow-backs; he was the last of the "Vie de Bohème" crowd.

Born out of his time and in an alien country, his plight was the more touching. He seemed to be suffering, without knowing it, from a profound nostalgia; this homesickness to be glimpsed in him had a tragic quality, since there didn't exist in the harsh present any such place as he pined for. Paris of the seventies, with its Quartier Latin, its Café Momus, its Nanas and Mimis and Fanny Legrands—not to mention its delightful morgue, with the fine moments of post-mortem publicity—would have been his proper sphere. He summed up all the attractive vice and ineffable innocence of that by-gone era. So the women of today adored the strayed reveller from the never-never-land of French fiction.

Even Mildred Pomeroy, with her fund of common sense, had felt the thrill. The man's total lack of forethought, his naïve desire to marry—if marriage were the queer modern arrangement—without a sou, had tapped a sentimental, lachrymose vein in her. His physical appeal had been all mixed up with a play upon her maternal instincts. She saw him as the incurable innocent—soiled and battered but still full of the "wandering boy" pathos. That was indeed the most perilous thing about young Fleet. He made the women throw aside their sophistication and forget their poise. He "got" them in somewhat the way a mawkish ballad about strayed lambs and lights left burning in windows had moved the more impressionable maidens of twenty-five years ago.

Robert Banks, stiff and patient and correct, had for years been on hand for the taking. He might have remained in the background all his life if it hadn't been for Fleet. By giving up the vivid rascal, Mildred had delivered herself over into the hands of her common sense and, with a grim sense of resignation, had let it guide her into the impregnable security of matrimony.

S. S.—Sept.—7

"Oh, it serves me right!" she would reflect sardonically.

Since she'd been a coward, she might as well creep into a fortress and deliver up the key. It was a fitting penance—watching from a high window the antics of Fleet and Virginia on the open road!

If Banks had only had the art of unbending a little bit in marriage, it might not have been so dull; she might have shut her eyes tight and got an illicit satisfaction from pretending it was with Fleet she was immured. But that bit of perverse play-acting was quite impossible. Banks as a husband footed too stately a measure; his heavy tread simply couldn't be confused with the frisky, faun-like trippings of George Fleet. After she had been Banks's wife a month, Mildred had consigned the man to his old-time place; he stood off somewhere in the middle distance, unobtrusive, formal, politely and systematically conversational as a grandfather's clock on a stair-landing.

By the end of the fall season in town, Mildred realized that her one salvation lay in getting a whiff now and then of the more tonic air Fleet and his Virginia were breathing. One afternoon, therefore, she had herself driven in a spic-and-span new limousine to their apartment. As she stood outside their door, she heard sounds of disorganized activity somewhere within. Virginia was calling out incoherent directions; a slamming door suddenly cut off her excited volubility. Then the entrance-door was opened just enough to allow room for the snub nose and one bold eye of a maid.

"Mr. and Mrs. Fleet aren't—" began the breathless domestic.

Mildred didn't allow her time to complete the lie.

"Please tell Mrs. Fleet," she said, "that Mrs. Banks is here to beg a cup of tea."

She was sweetly explicit; it was obvious that she had been taken for a dogged creditor.

That was enough to convince the maid she need no longer guard the threshold

with her buxom body. She stepped aside with a cordial smile of welcome and waved Mildred in.

The drawing-room was empty; it showed unmistakable signs, however, of recent and informal occupancy. A half-burned cigarette on the hearth sent up a straight ribbon of smoke; another cigarette smouldered in a tray with half a hundred butts. On the mantel stood a tall glass—empty; George in his precipitate exit from the scene had still managed to get that one duty off his mind!

Mildred took in at a swift glance the sprawling lines of the furniture—a huge divan, some grotesquely puffy but comfortable chairs, at least a score of plump, soft cushions—two downy nests of them in particular that still showed hollows betraying the late burden of human weight. The air of the big room reeked with tobacco and alcoholic fumes. Mildred drew in a deep breath; thank God the place didn't smell antiseptic!

The maid rapped twice sharply on a door at the end of the room. At once it swung open and George Fleet sauntered forth. The servant flashed him the sauciest possible smile and, without bothering to announce a visitor, brushed by him with a casual nod as of one good fellow to another.

The informality of this relation between master and menial took Mildred's breath away for a moment. But of course, she reflected, in a fool's Paradise all men were created equal. A servant became just a part—and an important part—of the perpetual conspiracy against the whole world of tradespeople and creditors. No wonder George took particular pains to be cordial and deferential in the presence of his maids.

The moment he caught sight of Mildred, Fleet broke into the disarming smile that could at once convert him from the worried, hunted scapegoat to the wistful, half-shy youngster. Hurrying over to her, he grasped both her hands eagerly.

"I'm damned glad!" he cried. "We had no idea you'd drop in on us like this. We expected, if you ever *did* come, that

there'd be outriders and bugles and things."

At that point Virginia swept into the room and engulfed Mildred in a vigorous embrace. Virginia resembled an effulgent Teutonic goddess, with great white arms, masses of blonde hair in disarray, and a beautiful, stupid face flushed but placid. She was always a bit breathless, as if after a rapid descent from the Venusburg. Her bosom heaved now, her big blue eyes beamed with pleasure. Mildred, while she was being kissed, took in the strong scent of whiskey; she noted, too, a ragged tear in the lacy train of Virginia's negligée and a round stain in the front of the satin bodice.

"My dear, I've never seen a prettier frock!" Virginia cried. "And do look at that exquisite hat, George. Don't for heaven's sake, examine *me*, Mildred. We live like pigs; we wallow in dirt and cigarette ashes. And we spill things over ourselves and the furniture." She laughed with a jovial heartiness. "I am so glad to see you. Sit down. George, brush off those cushions; there may be jam or salad-dressing on them."

Fleet took out his handkerchief and flicked it cursorily over the pillows his wife pointed out. Then Mildred was pushed into the billowy nest.

"We're full of comforts, you see," Virginia remarked, "even if we *aren't* clean."

She picked up the cluttered ash tray and dumped its contents into the fireplace. "George, please take this out and wash it and put it on the arm of Mildred's chair. It requires training to get used to the smell of day-before-yesterday's cigarettes."

Fleet received the tray in perfect docility and disappeared with it.

Virginia sank down on the divan and gave Mildred a good-natured smile.

"I was meant for this pig-pen life, you know," she announced. "We are *perfectly* happy. I have forgotten that refinement and niceness exist. The best of it is that, like other pigs, we are constantly rooting up truffles. Oh,

we're sordid—no doubt about that. We keep our noses buried in the dirt. But we haven't the slightest misgiving about the future. That's the point. We have each other, you see. We are absurdly in love—and we shall continue just that way till the last trump."

She beamed her adoration at Fleet, returning with the scoured ash tray. They fell to at once on tobacco, highballs and the messiest kind of cream-cake. Virginia nonchalantly deposited her ashes on the floor beside her; Fleet smoked a pipe.

"We haven't a clean napkin in the place," Virginia apologized—but without any evidence of shame. "Give Mildred your handkerchief, George. She won't know how to manage this cake. It's rich, unhealthy stuff—but we adore it. One of the maids keeps us supplied—because *she* adores George."

III

MILDRED stayed on for an hour—the most amazing tea-hour she had ever spent. When she left, her cheeks were burning-hot from the unwonted number of highballs and cigarettes; her digestive organs, too, felt sadly awry. She took away with her a vivid picture of Fleet himself: his blue eyes burning even more intensely than she had remembered, his mouth, twisted to one side by his pipe-stem, breaking into one gay smile after another. His whole attitude had been that of the young and ardent husband. When he looked at Mildred, it had been with a certain roguish defiance, as if to say, "See the wonderful prize *you* helped me to land."

Obviously, nobody existed for him but the beautiful, serene and blowsy Virginia. He was immersed to the ears in the vulgar frolic. It was strange how often a man of apparent refinement found a blissful oblivion in an effulgent, over-fed woman. Mildred harbored already a bitter resentment against Virginia for thus cheapening Fleet. In the past, he had been at least a perilous scamp; now he seemed only coarse-grained, for all his boyish and wistful

exterior. Those deliciously poignant memories had become more than a little soiled.

"I shan't go there again," Mildred told herself. "It's simply degrading."

The afternoon had made her wretched, unhappy. The abominable things she'd eaten and drunk had something to do with her state; the main trouble, however—though she had no actual realization of it—was a bitter jealousy. She had thought herself quite reconciled to being dropped out of Fleet's life; but just the same she had expected him to throw a few rueful glances over his shoulder at that dim past of theirs. He might have had the common politeness to simulate a little regret or resentment at the beggarly way she'd treated him.

Mildred had taken it for granted that her visit would in some fashion depress the man. She had seen herself as a personage before whom the luckless pair would feel a certain uneasiness and chagrin. And she had found only a disgusting, aggressively assertive happiness. Fleet and Virginia hadn't let her interrupt their good time for a moment. She had sat on the outskirts and had been ignored with bluff cordiality, while the others played up to each other. Nothing could have pointed more brutally the dreariness of her own plight as the mere commonplace protected wife of a mediocrity. She loathed Virginia, she reflected; she pitied poor Fleet; but the queer part of the business was that, from now on, the greater force of her implacable resentment was directed at her unoffending husband.

"I shan't go there again," she had said; but she soon found she couldn't keep away. Those poignant memories might be sullied; they persisted, for all that.

She excused her return to their apartment by insisting her motive was sheer pity for Fleet. If he hadn't ceased to count, it was because he could still stir the maternal in her. He was the incurable small boy; the rearing of him rested with Virginia and she was making a shameful bungle of the business. His ruin would be complete unless a

gentler, finer influence were brought to bear.

So she reasoned to herself sophistically and failed to pick out the real reason for her visits. To force Fleet's volatile emotions back into the old channels—that was her underlying purpose. She was setting herself off against the flushed Virginia; the contrast *must* tell. She wore her loveliest and freshest clothes; in the ferment and heat and confusion of the place, the man couldn't but find eventually a repose and comfort in her cool presence. But she never admitted the scheme to herself. It was pity, sheer pity, she kept clamoring with stubborn self-deception.

Mildred had tea with the Fleets often and made a third at several sloppy and indigestible dinners. During her visits, she studied the situation unceasingly. In the end, she had the rich reward of perceiving how wretchedly poor Virginia had blundered in her married life. It didn't pay to be the utter fool with Fleet. He required a more delicate handling. It was all very well for a few months; but the sort of diet Virginia specialized in must inevitably cloy the man's fickle palate. Mildred became the grim witness of more than one illuminating scene.

One day, for example, when she arrived for tea, Virginia greeted her with even more breathlessness than usual.

"I am so hot and fagged and cross," she announced, her smile still placidly sweet under her heightened flush. "I've been on my knees dusting since early morning. Just when I've educated myself up to this confusion, George has to turn finicky. It's all the fault of one of the maids. She left me yesterday—said she couldn't stay on and keep her self-respect. Fancy it! It delighted me; but when I told poor George he developed a positive remorse. He confessed he was ashamed of himself—and of me. So I went right down on my marrow-bones. This isn't the time to get fussy, Mildred. Things are simply beyond control now. It's worse than those awful stables Hercules was set to clean."

"I shouldn't have come," Mildred was politely contrite.

"Oh—but I'm glad. I need the rest," Virginia told her.

"And you won't have any more of those delicious cream-cakes," Mildred pursued in sympathetic tones.

"Don't mention those cream-cakes," Virginia caught her up. "They're a fearful cross to me. They're Marion's contribution to the general untidiness. She's still with us; she'll always be with us. Her devotion to George is a touching thing. George has been helping me today. He wasn't meant to mop floors or scour porcelain. The poor dear is a wreck. He's in the tub now—"

Virginia babbled on and Mildred examined her shrewdly. There still wasn't a crack in the woman's good-humor—that was obvious; but in her great blue eyes a perplexity, a helpless uncomprehending anxiety showed. She was worrying about her adorable George. Evidently he had evinced an irritable desire to get his nose out of the mud.

"Poor Virginia!" Mildred exulted. "Poor silly fool!"

Somewhere in the offing a door clicked open.

"Virginia!" Fleet's voice had an ominous sharpness. "Virginia—come here a minute!"

"Oh, dear!" His wife got up on her aching legs. "Something fearful must have happened to him in the tub. Yes, George!" she called with a patient geniality and hurried out of the room.

She returned with an armful of linen and a work-basket.

"I had no idea before I married," she opined, struggling as she talked to thread a needle, "no idea that men wore these absurd under-garments. They're no bigger than what babies use. George is much too large for his; he's constantly bursting out of them. And before I know it, he's destitute—in rags. He has hundreds of these tiny trousers." She held up a skimpy garment. "But he insists they all need mending. He refuses to put on a stitch now unless it's a *whole* stitch. Ah—I'm in such haste, I'm so unstrung that I can't

thread this needle. *Do help me out, Mildred.*"

At that moment, the maid with the snub nose and the bold eye walked in upon them with perfect insouciance.

"You needn't hurry, Madame, with the mending," she announced casually. "I patched up four sets of underclothes for Mr. Fleet this morning." She tapped a heap of neatly folded garments on her left arm. "I will leave them at the door of his bath-room."

"Ah, thank you, Marion," Virginia exclaimed after the retreating servant.

Then she shook her head in Mildred's direction and indulged in a weary sigh—undoubtedly one of the first in all her good-humored career.

"That girl!" she mused. "She is *unique*. She treats George like her own property. As for me—I'm just the dirt under her feet."

When Fleet, polished and radiant from his ablutions, at last put in an appearance, he deliberately avoided Virginia's glances of adoration and cajolery. He picked a dainty way across the floor, like a cat avoiding mud-puddles; he examined the divan with scrupulous care before he sat down. Then he flashed Mildred an eager, vivid smile.

"How cool and refreshing you do look," he told her.

"Doesn't she?" Virginia was genuine in her enthusiasm. "We've had our tea, George, but there's still some cake for you. The ice is all melted, though; the highballs are lukewarm."

He looked straight at her then and his mouth quivered into a cruel expression of utter nausea.

"No, thanks. I couldn't touch a thing," he said. "Have you a decent cigarette, Mildred? I'm sick of *Fatimas*."

While Mildred offered him her case, Virginia exclaimed, "But your pipe! Where's your pipe, George?"

He shuddered. "I chucked the damned thing out. It was—*foul*."

"Ah—why did you do that?" his wife protested. "I loved it. I would have kept it as a souvenir."

"A souvenir!" he echoed with elo-

quent irony. "It was dirty enough, God knows." He grimaced in Mildred's direction.

Without warning, tears sprang into Virginia's eyes. She blinked them away bravely but the others had seen them. On the instant, Fleet was all remorse. He bent over and patted his wife's hand gently.

Mildred got up and, striking a tactful, non-committal note of departure, hastily let herself out.

She shut the door behind her. The muffled sound of tumultuous, agonized sobs followed her almost to the lift.

"Poor Virginia!" she reflected with a sudden swift drop into remorse. "What a brute I am!"

IV

THINGS had, of course, gone from bad to worse with the Fleets. George's fits of remorse grew less frequent. Twice he got up and sauntered carelessly out of the apartment, leaving the weeping Virginia to Mildred's ministrations. Often he was absent altogether from the scene.

"Gambling and getting drunk—with others!" Virginia would complain, miserably. "How was I to know he wasn't getting what he wanted? He's simply deserted me; the only reason he's ever here is on the chance of seeing you, dear."

She could still be transparent in her honesty.

Mildred had already sensed the veer in Fleet's attitude. Capricious as she had hoped, he had swung back to his old adoration. He would keep his eyes fixed on her now for long stretches, as if in a desperate effort to draw some response from her. Not once, however, did he get that swift answering signal.

In a way, Mildred was as perverse as he; now she'd got him entangled again, she was more miserable than before. She felt like a criminal; all her affection flowed out to the unfortunate Virginia. Her excursions to the Fleet apartment had become positive torment. She was vaguely aware at last that she

was in some measure responsible for the crisis that was brewing. . .

Fleet had followed her in dumb devotion out to the lift one day.

"Oh, Mildred!" he exclaimed. "Come again soon—come *often*. You don't know how I long for these afternoons."

Suddenly he had caught her hand and kissed it.

She freed herself with a flash of anger.

"I shan't come back at all—now," she said scornfully, and turned away without listening to his stammered apology.

She kept her word. For a month she heard nothing from the Fleets. Then late one afternoon Virginia had been announced.

In her tarnished finery and spectacular hat, Virginia was still the Teutonic goddess. Her big eyes retained their placid beams; but somehow her breathless calm possessed today a certain conscious dignity. She seemed to be aware that she had emerged with honor from some crisis.

"Well," she announced without preliminaries, "I've left George. And I am quite reconciled, quite happy about it. I couldn't stay any longer and see the misery I was making him go through. I would have sunk deeper and deeper into my mud-hole until derricks couldn't have dragged me out. So—I left before things got to that fearful pass. George was unkind, of course; if he'd been anything else he wouldn't have been human. He needs a stern disciplinarian; I hadn't the courage to slap his hands and look out for him. So—I failed."

"I understand," Mildred returned. "You failed, because you were tender-hearted."

"After he woke up to our sordidness, he tried—at first—to be nice," Virginia pursued. "I shan't forget that. He'd hurt me—and then he'd be genuinely sorry. George is a dear boy at heart. He's just nervous. I ended by giving him cold shivers up and down his spine; it is no wonder he lost all control over himself at last."

"You *are* the most unselfish of women, Virginia," Mildred told her.

Virginia's answering smile was serenely unclouded.

"I want him to be happy, you know," she remarked. "He *can't* be happy without a woman. He's helpless without one of us. He was even content with *me* for a while. The poor boy is miserably ill now—"

"Ill?" Mildred showed her astonishment.

"Yes—ill," Virginia returned. "Doesn't it seem cruel of me—to leave him when he's so wretched? We quarrelled night before last—at least, *he* quarrelled; I'm too stolid for such a thing as a row. He rushed out of the house at midnight. When he's angry, his one idea is to injure his own health if possible. It was fearful weather—you remember?—rain and sleet and a freezing wind. He went splashing about for hours. I think he must have *rolled* in the gutters. He was without a hat or coat, too. Fortunately, he'd been drinking; that saved him. Of course, he came back in a raging fever. I put him to bed at once and tried to make him comfortable. But simply having to *look* at me made him worse; his temperature went higher and higher. Then I knew definitely that it was time I cleared out. When a woman can't be a help to a sick man, when her presence makes him *worse*, there's just one course to take. She must get out."

Virginia nodded her head several times vigorously at Mildred; then she sighed.

"But I'm wasting time," she exclaimed after a moment. "I left him in Marion's charge. She is competent—as you've seen for yourself. The point is, though, that George in his present miserable state needs some one else."

She leaned over suddenly and rested a hand on Mildred's knee:

"He needs *you*, Mildred. I've come to ask you if you'll go to see him—a few minutes every day for a while. Medicine won't help him, but with your aid he'll pull out with flying colors. Of course, if you'd take him soups and broths and little delicacies like that, you'd be hastening the recovery."

She got up and, as Mildred rose too,

enveloped her in a warm embrace.

"You'll do it, Mildred?" she asked. "I should feel so much easier about the poor sick cherub."

"Ah—indeed I *will*!" Mildred returned.

Left alone in the library, she laughed to herself nervously. In the deepening gloom of the room, she caught the glint of her eyes in a mirror. For months and months, she had been waiting for this moment.

"Fool's Paradise," she murmured to herself. "Fool's Paradise!"

She saw it all now. From the very day of her marriage to Banks, she had been searching for an entrance into the crazy Eden from whose threshold she had been snatched by her common sense. Ever since that day of weak surrender, she had kept returning to the closed door, fingering the lock, testing its strength; and now, all at once the barrier had given way. Her foot was on the threshold again; she had been traveling too dusty a road in the last few months to resist the heady spell. She'd enter now and close the door after her. Banks had simply vanished into thin air at the first intoxicating whiff from the enchanted bower. Common sense had faded out together with her husband. She was free to be a fool!

V

"THERE's just the *one* way to be cured of you, George. I'm taking it, you see." Mildred sat on a low stool beside the divan in Fleet's drawing-room and smiled into the man's intense eyes.

Swathed in blankets to the chin, he feasted silently on her incredible presence. He seemed unable to take his feverish, perplexed and jubilant gaze from her. His profane exclamations of joy and wonder had sent him off into paroxysms of coughing. Mildred, with peremptory sternness, had therefore ordered him to be quiet.

"Any damned thing you say—anything," he had returned, half-chuckling and half-choking, and had lapsed into obedient, blissful silence.

"I left Robert a very frank note," Mildred had announced. "I didn't mince matters. I simply told him in black and white that I was coming to you. I've brought very few clothes—and no money. That's the sensible course, I believe. I want my lesson to be a stern one."

At that, Fleet had heaved himself up, cleared his arms of their wrappings and seized her hands in a hot grasp.

"Whatever you think best, Mildred," he told her hoarsely. "I leave it all to you."

"I mean to put you through a course of sprouts," she pursued. "From now on, you will toe the mark, George. I may be wrong—but it seems to me that with rigid discipline and thoroughly *clean* surroundings, you can be made into something like a responsible person. As far as real development goes, you're just about ten years old. No one has done you good yet. I shall give you a practical education. The experiment is worth trying—though of course you *may* be hardened beyond repair now. I used to think you incurable. But watching you lately with Virginia, I seemed to see a few encouraging glimmers. I'm not quite fool enough to take you in hand like this without at least a faint hope of redeeming you. I want some compensation for the cheap lingerie I'll have to begin wearing."

"Never!" he protested. "You'll never wear anything but the best, Mildred—if I have to shoulder a pick-axe to collect the money."

She laughed. "That's very chivalrous. I like it—though I know there's not a word of truth in it. When I say I see hopeful signs in you, I don't mean any such germs of heroism as that, George." She shook her head slowly. "You're too ingratiating, I'm afraid, ever to be worth anything."

She freed her hands and got to her feet.

"This isn't the time for mere talk," she remarked. "It's time for action. I shall get the maids together at once and begin the cleaning."

Fleet grasped one of her hands.

"Don't," he pleaded. "Don't leave me. Can't you see that the place doesn't need cleaning? It's like new wax. Marion—the only maid who's stuck by me—hasn't left a speck of dirt anywhere. Sit down, Mildred; I want you near me."

She had taken a survey of the room while he talked.

"The girl is unique," she acknowledged, sitting down again and brushing his tousled hair back gently from his forehead. "She's done a neat job; she's stolen a march on me. I really must compliment her and raise her wages, I suppose."

Fleet groaned.

"For the love of heaven, Mildred, don't do that," he begged. "Pay her a week in advance and get rid of her. She drives me half-crazy. She treats me like a kid—or a baby. She tries to

manage me every minute of the day. What the devil's the use of being a man if you're not given credit for it? For my sake, kick her out, Mildred. I've done my best—but she refuses every time to leave me."

Mildred was looking at him now with a deep and sorrowful absorption.

"I'm afraid methods don't matter—with you," she mused. "You're helpless without one of us—and then you're helpless without another of us. That's it in a nut-shell. Of course, Robert will think me insane. I wonder if he'd ever be fool enough to take me back?"

"Take you back?" Fleet's vivid eyes became clouded with misgiving. "What are you talking about, Mildred?"

"Nothing," she returned, and stroked his cheek slowly. "Nothing. You're adorable, George."



The Indian Mound

By *Ethel Talbot Scheffauer*

OVER the stones on the hill-top
The wind of the morning blew,
Out of the cranny, out of the cliff,
The midnight ravens flew.

The keen wind on the hill-top
Sang of a hidden guilt,
With faint, far voices of fighters
For whom the hill was built.

The round hill of the sleepers
Sheltered its thousand dead;
In the gray dust of the hill-top
We found an arrowhead.



A Tale of the Chase

By Henry FitzGerald

HE was the last man in the world you would imagine could inspire passion in a woman. He looked like an apostle and smelt of Harris tweed.

Now, the odor of Harris tweed is one that depends precariously for its popularity upon your particular mood. Sometimes you enjoy its peaty pungency. But usually it is depressing. This is because the Harris tweed type is usually depressing. It has a loose frame, broomstick limbs, a straggling beard and nearly always an Adam's apple. Spectacles with varying tinges of blue in the glasses may or may not be contributed. In this instance they were, and a pair of pale blue eyes lay behind them. The eyelids, incidentally, kept up a constant blinking, like a woman endeavoring to shed tears.

I met him a few years ago in a restaurant in the "early Forties" off Sixth Avenue. It was one of those noisy, clattering eating places that are restful simply because the noise is French noise. We got into conversation casually over an exchange of the mustard for the bottled sauce, and it seemed no time before I found under my nose the man's card, thrust forward between two long, straight fingers, palm uppermost.

It was a business card and crumpled. The firm traded in barbers' supplies and was "*Represented by MR. THAD-DEUS DEEMING.*"

I raised my eyebrows as one who would say, "Oh," and still gazing at the card reached forth and took a sip of wine. This was because I felt the man's eyes upon my face and I had nothing to say.

"Thanks," I murmured in due course,

assuming an air of interest and extending the card. He took it quite naturally and while replacing it in a leather wallet, canted his head to one side, twisted his lips into a reminiscent smile and confided:

"I was a musician once."

"Oh!" I said. "And now you sell soap and shaving-mugs and hair-wash?"

"Yes," he replied, shaking with inaudible mirth. He was engaged in sweeping the crumbs off the table with both hands, and I noticed casually that the fingers bent back abnormally at the base.

He was obviously waiting for encouragement, and as we were both beginning our dinners, and this was a restaurant where I never hurried—there being no music—I said to him:

"Don't you want to tell me something about it?"

"Why, only, sir, if you care to listen," he replied, and so quick on the heels of my idle query that, fearing I had exhibited a forced interest, I sat up and said with cordiality and truth that I would be most glad to hear even a portion of a history that must necessarily be interesting.

And he began to relate how he had run away from school, having been headstrong in his boyhood. It was the usual stuff up to a certain point, the kind of thing you read in a "standard" magazine concerning the early days of self-made men. And when he came to the part where he "fell in love with a young girl who was as good and pure as she was beautiful," I began to dream and found myself speculating upon the physical man before me.

He was palpably of English descent, of a strain that had run to seed in a strenuous land. I could see the Deeming line placidly petering out and tapering into the fine, ineffectual point represented by Thaddeus himself. Subconsciously, I noted the absence of sex aggressiveness in the man.

The spell of languor that had lain upon me all day was gradually being deepened by drink. For upon a foundation of three or four cocktails discussed at a bar with some friends before dinner, I had consumed during the course of my companion's story nearly two bottles of the excellent red wine supplied with the meal. My impressions were therefore of the photographic order, blurred as to outline, perhaps, but not hampered and chivvied by imagination, for which reason I am the more inclined to trust them.

I can remember the colorless voice recording passionless trivialities, as I drew vague pictures on the tablecloth with burnt matches, my face flushed and my head swaying slightly from side to side, while I preserved a general attitude of interest. It was when half consciously I realized that he had come to a point in the story of his life implicating a crimson-cloaked woman, with flat black hair, a pale oval face and scarlet lips—I recall his adjectives perfectly—that I perked up.

It seemed that he had wandered into a Middle-Western city in a condition of positive want and as a last, famished resort had accepted a position in the orchestra of the leading playhouse.

"And this is where my career as a musician begins," he said with significance, pointing one of his long fingers at me.

"And what instrument did you play?" I inquired.

"The bass drum," he replied promptly and made to push on with his story.

But I sat back and laughed somewhat immoderately. He stopped to laugh a little with me, and I liked him for it.

"Yes! And all the percussion instru-

ments, too!" he exclaimed with animation, again pointing in my face.

We both laughed a little more, and he was highly pleased, for we were warming up to our story in promising style. Then he relapsed into gravity and leaning toward me, a light of genuine excitement in his eyes, he went on, dropping his voice:

"She was sitting in a box the first time I saw her. . . . She never took her eyes off me. . . . At first, I didn't think she could be looking at me. . . . I kept turning 'round, looking into the stage wings and up into the boxes on my side of the theater. . . . But no, sir, it was me she was looking at!"

He paused, pursed up his mouth and blinked steadily at me for the silent space of a few seconds. Then he swept a few crumbs aside, sniffed, and pinched his thin nostrils between thumb and forefinger with a fleeting gesture.

"No, sir, she never took her eyes off me during the entire performance. . . . She was quite alone. . . . I made all kinds of mistakes. . . . I did lose my job through her later, as a matter of fact. . . ."

Thaddeus Deeming here broke off and, leaning back for a moment, laughed weakly with tears in his eyes, partly tears of mirth—and perhaps other emotions—but partly also of drink, for he too had been moistening his lips rather copiously.

"I watched her leaving the theater and held her eyes right to the exit."

"Was she there the next night?" I asked eagerly, for I scented romance.

"Yes," he replied with emphasis, "and the next night and the next," speaking louder, until I glanced about apprehensively.

"On the third night she visited the party in the box over my head. I followed her with my eyes glued to hers as she made her way around the back of the first balcony."

Here my companion's lips grew dry and awkwardly splashing some wine into his glass, he took a few gulps.

"You'd never believe how I felt, sir, knowing that that woman, that won-

derful, tigerish woman, was sitting there above me! My blood ran hot and cold, sir, and I didn't dare look up!"

My interest in the story now underwent a chemical change. Between us there yawned a chasm as wide as that which yawns between myself and John Milton, the epic poet, or between Giongione and Picabia. But I decided to hear on, and sat hunched up regarding the man as through the wrong end of a telescope. For he had become translated from a subject to an object.

Thaddeus Deeming went on:

"You may well imagine the start it gave me when at the end of the act a long white glove dropped plumb between my knees!"

"Yes," I said with feeling. "I can picture your discomfiture!"

"And the perfume of it—" He drew in his breath through nostrils that distended and fluttered to the ecstatic memory. And a spasmodic spark of hope for him was rekindled within me, only to flicker out again almost immediately.

"Pinned inside the glove was a tiny slip of paper bearing her name and that of the leading hotel in the city."

"Aha!" I interjected.

"Yes," he agreed, nodding a tribute to my sympathetic sense.

"And she was a Polish countess, sir! A Polish countess! Think of that!"

The man, almost exhausted by the physical strain of narration, leaned back and laboriously lit a cigarette. I toyed with the salt-cellar, balancing it on the lid of the coffee-pot and pondering on the queer, barren story. I was deeply depressed and had reached the stage where it was immaterial to me whether the man went on with the tale or not. Such a tale could have but one ending.

It was no surprise to me, therefore, when, continuing, Thaddeus related how he took the glove to the leader of the orchestra, who stuffed it into his pocket with the gruff statement that he would turn it in to the box-office after the performance.

I smiled at certain delicious thoughts

that fluttered through my imagination like gay butterflies at this point in the story. That leader—well, he too may have his story.

Nor was it any surprise to learn further that the tenacious Countess caused to be delivered to the diffident drummer, while still sitting in the midst of his percussion instruments, a seductively scented note containing a peremptory command to attend her pleasure at the stage door.

The man lived over again the searching emotions of the ordeal, as he described how he sought frantically to make his exit by some other than the stage door, but found that this was strictly against the rules of the theater; and how he finally determined to face it manfully, trusting to luck and the crowd of stage hands who would be surging out with him; and how, fortune failing him, the Countess laid hands upon his trembling arm and escorted him, feebly protesting, to her waiting carriage; and how, from sheer terror, he stumbled and fell on his knees, and how. . . .

But it is the hunter who should relate the tale of the chase.

I had long since perceived that this man was trying to tell the woman's story, so I determined to hear no more of it, and reaching for my hat and cane, I stood up and broke in upon him:

"You left your drum in the theater, I presume?"

In my half-inebriated state I leaned forward over the back of my chair and smiled a broad but vacant smile upon the outraged Thaddeus Deeming.

The man's physiognomy changed as completely as the face of a rubber doll, exhibiting an amazing *pot-pourri* of emotions. He was very wroth. Leaping to his feet, he seized a French loaf and made to smite me over the head. But the loaf being partially severed into half a dozen pieces, after the manner of French bread, collapsed into its component parts and fell among the dishes.

At this I shook with sudden, silent mirth.

But my laughter changed to a kind

of creepy horror when a glance at my assailant's face revealed an expression of the most abject terror stamped upon it. He was looking out over my shoulder. A cry broke from his lips and he clutched at his chair to preserve his balance.

I turned, and there, gliding swiftly toward us with the set smile and luminous eye of a cat advancing upon its prey, was a woman with flat black hair, a pale oval face and scarlet lips.

Shaking with powerless merriment,

I leaned on the back of my chair and watched the hapless Thaddeus Deeming wrestling and scuffling in the amorous grip of his Polish countess. And as the two gyrated in the angle formed by the table and the wall, the air was disturbed with the half-stifled shrieks of Thaddeus and the odor of Harris tweed.

Helpless tears of tickled inebriety coursed down my face as, sluing on my heels, I marched off with the stiff emphatic gait that apes sobriety.



The Fool to His Beloved

By Marx G. Sabel

I DON'T mind
 Fooling the others,
 But you—
 I want you
 To know
 That I am not
 Smiling!



THERE are two things becoming to a woman of forty: her virtue and her veil.



LOVE is a matter of faith and fervor—the more faith, the less fervor.



A PRETTY girl of sixteen is like the overture to a great opera.



The Saint of Valera

By L. M. Hussey

AS the nuns and novices formed to enter the refectory the news was whispered among them that a company of soldiers had appeared in the plaza and was drawn up in front of the convent. The line hesitated, but Mother Lucinda turned at the door and regarded the nuns for an instant and under the spell of her mute command they followed into the refectory.

As if no immediate disaster impended, they took their places before the plain wooden tables, standing behind their benches. Consuelo stood with the other novices, the nuns were placed nearer the door, the superiors assumed their accustomed position in front of the smallest table, and under the great crucifix fastened to the wall.

Mother Lucinda recited the grace, the heads of all were bowed with the Gloria, they murmured the responses to the *Deo gratias*. Then all were seated as usual, each in front of a plain white plate. The novices, finding it easier to forget, since the dissolution of the convent community did not entail broken vows for them, began to eat, but most of the nuns touched no food, and the superiors conversed together in whispers.

Consuelo, discovering herself without appetite, looked across at the faces of the sisters and from them to the faces of the superiors as they conversed together in whispers.

It was plain that many of the sisters had been weeping, and a few of them seemed verging toward hysteria, but the face of Mother Lucinda was almost unchanged, as if she possessed the secret of an inner strength that would sustain her beyond the worst disaster.

Consuelo found that the wrinkled, old face had lost nothing of its dignity, and very little of its strength, and for several moments she wondered if the news were true; surely Mother Lucinda, in her calm, and dignity and strength, would find the means to save them.

Finally they all arose and passing out of the refectory, proceeded to the garden for the customary recreation hour. There were no formalities during recreation, and so the sisters and the novices broke up into little groups. Now, at last, they could talk together.

When were the soldiers coming in, everyone asked?

One of the novices slipped away and returned with the news that the soldiers were still drawn up in the plaza, in front of the convent. Lucia, a novice in Consuelo's group, began to explain, as far as she understood it, the act of Guzman Blanco in closing the convent. Lucia had received a visit from her brother just a week before, on the same day that Guzman Blanco had issued his terrible proclamation. She was going back to her brother's home, she had less to fear than some of the others, and so she expounded the situation with considerable clearness.

"We are one of the contemplative orders," she said, "and Guzman Blanco says that the contemplative orders are too numerous, drain the money from the pockets of the people, and do no good!"

"As if interceding for all the doomed souls of humanity were not one of the highest kinds of good!" cried a sister, standing with the novices.

"But, Sister Virginia," went on Lucia,

"my brother explains that the *Comandante en Jefe* doesn't understand that sort of goodness. He says that the active orders may remain, with certain restrictions; they don't intend to close the communities of the Mercy sisters, but he says that our orders interfere with the prosperity of the country, and with the government and that is why we must all go."

"What wickedness!"

They exclaimed against the outrage, and then they began to speak of their personal affairs. Most of the novices were returning to their homes, and this fortunate majority had little to fear, since they did not come under the terrifying clause of the *pronunciamiento* that provided for the marriage of every novice unclaimed by her family of friends to a soldier in the victorious army. Most of the nuns were escaping too; devout people in the city had secretly provided them with the funds to leave the country. Mother Lucinda was going to Spain.

The little group of novices began to tell each other of their plans; they spoke of their homes, described their brothers and sisters, wondered how they would feel, returning again to ordinary life. Many of them were sad, and a few had tears in their eyes, but others endeavoured to conceal an inward buoyance of spirits, found themselves engaged in an adventure, and were secretly glad to leave the community.

Consuelo withdrew a little. They had asked her about her plans, but she had not, from some obscure, inner shame, confessed the truth. No one was coming to claim her. She had no friends, and she knew nothing of the fate of her uncle, who had opposed the successful intrigues of Guzman Blanco. Perhaps her uncle was dead, he might be in prison, or perhaps he had escaped from the country.

The red sunlight fell down slantwise into the garden and threw the long purple shadows of the immense palms upon the white convent wall; the fronds of the palms moved slowly in the late afternoon air, and their distorted shad-

ows expanded and contracted over the white wall like immense, immaterial fingers grasping at the hard stone.

Consuelo was oppressed and fearful, but her fears took no definite shapes. She looked about at the convent walls, at the flowered walls of the garden, at the shadows of the tall palms, wondering what was about to happen to her. For years the convent had been all her life, the early years of the convent school and the past year of her novitiate, which soon would have terminated in the taking of vows. She understood, from external facts, that a catastrophe had come into their convent life, but she understood very little of the political causes and could only dimly imagine what her life in the outer world might be.

Now there was an agitation amongst the nuns; the Mother Superior hurriedly left the garden, the superiors followed her. The murmur of conversation ceased abruptly. Even those who were sure to be claimed by their parents or friends looked alarmed, for they feared some failure in their plans. Voices were heard within the convent, a tramping of feet, words of command. A company of soldiers from the army of the Provisional President issued out of the sanctuary and were drawn up in the garden.

Some of the novitiates began to cry, the nuns trembled, the superiors stood near with pale faces and compressed lips. Their prayers had failed them, the outrage was all but consummated, and now, in the end, they knew that no one would again watch, before the altar of this convent, in perpetual adoration.

The soldiers stared about them, grimaced, smirked, shuffled their feet. Some of them looked in surprise at the nuns, astonished to find themselves within the convent walls; others observed, with greedy eyes, the geese and hens wandering about the garden.

Their cotton uniforms were washed and clean, their miscellaneous guns polished and oiled, all of them wore shoes. They were men from one of

the favoured regiments of Guzman Blanco's victorious army.

A young lieutenant, dressed in a handsome, gold-braided uniform, began to examine the papers previously prepared for each sister and novice. The captain, a thick, muscular man whose face was adorned terribly with melodramatic moustaches, stood at one side talking to an old man in civilian clothes, the *jefe civil*, who was present to execute the legal ceremony of marriage between any soldier and any novice unclaimed by her friends.

Those who were returning to their homes, or for whom money and passports had been provided for emigration, were quickly separated and grouped together at one side of the garden. Consuelo, with a few others, was unredeemed, and stood with her face lowered, stirred by fears as obscure as premonitions.

The captain, pulling at his huge moustaches, was arguing in a loud, somewhat incoherent voice with the *jefe civil*. He moved about unsteadily, his ornate uniform was a little disheveled; obviously he had spent the day in a café. Now and then a soldier looked at him, and when positive that he was not observed, ventured to grin. Moreover, their discipline was a little relaxed, for they were soon to be mustered out, their captain was leaving in a day or two. They were pleased to see a weakness in the man who had driven them through the campaign with such a brutal resolution.

Captain Bermudez vented an exceptionally loud expletive and Consuelo, startled, raised her face and looked at him. He was standing a few yards away from her; the *jefe civil* was on the other side. As she raised her face he turned about angrily and met her eyes.

She was different from the rest, her skin was whiter, her hair was not black, but reddish brown. She was slender, fragile. Her type was not usual in the country, and Captain Bermudez, in his foggy state, found something marvelous in the sight of her. He stared

at her half grimly, half ridiculously, his mouth dropping open a little, his moustaches drooping like limp roses, two deep furrows forming a ferocious frown between his eyes.

He turned and motioned to the ornate lieutenant. The young man approached briskly, the suggestion of a smile curving upon his full lips.

"Who is that girl?" asked Bermudez.

The lieutenant answered that Consuelo was unclaimed and without passports.

Captain Bermudez wheeled again and inspected Consuelo. She began to tremble, she was afraid, she wondered why the Reverend Mother, heretofore so infallible, had not prevailed against the entrance of these men into the convent. The man with the enormous moustaches still stared at her and she felt the fear of a defenseless thing released into a forest.

The young lieutenant was smiling, the soldiers were beginning to laugh, Captain Bermudez grinned ferociously and clapped the *jefe civil* on the back, and at this blow the little old man doubled up for a moment like one with the cramps, and between his smiles he coughed dolorously.

Bermudez seized the old man's hand and pulled him forward.

"Santa Maria!" he blasphemed. "One of the animals might have married her!"

The soldiers grinned at his insult. Consuelo found herself confronted by the ancient official and at her side the captain loomed up like a monster, swaying and knocking against her. His breath smelt of *aguardiente*; he breathed with difficulty. Astonishingly she heard the old man in front of her pronouncing solemn words in a sing-song voice, as if he were chanting in a language whose phrases he had committed literally, without understanding them.

"And in the name of the law I give you this woman, for your companion, but not for your slave. . ."

He drew back, smiling, still coughing a little. The company of soldiers beat

their guns upon the flagstones and a disorderly cheer filled the walled space, disturbing the twilight quiet like a tumult of maniacs loosed in the garden.

Consuelo's face was white, bloodless as a dead face, and even the vital ray of the sun seemed to die as it fell over her person. A nightmarish sensation of unreality possessed her with obscure terrors. She heard the soldiers yelling, she saw the nuns dimly, and in this company and this tumult she felt herself alone, as if she were a spirit condemned to material tortures.

Bermudez's incoherency increased, his energies succumbed to the cumulative effect of the *aguardiente* he had been consuming all the day. He forgot about his bride, he fell heavily into the arms of the young lieutenant, who bore him off into the convent. The soldiers began to move the others out of the garden. In a moment the superb lieutenant returned and addressed himself to Consuelo.

"My pardon, señora Bermudex," he said. "The señor Capitan is ill; he will be unable to entertain you this evening. Perhaps it will be better for you to remain in the convent tonight. I will leave a guard. The señor Capitan will communicate his wishes in the morning."

II

THE two guards, uncouth, clumsy fellows, former *llaneros* from the State of Trujillo, followed the girl into the convent and when she shut the door of her cell and flung herself upon the little cot, they squatted on the floor outside the door. She could hear them conversing there, using the vernacular of the plains.

Consuelo pressed her hands over her face like one in an agony. An immense enervation possessed her, like a narcotic. She was incredibly weary, incapable of motion, as if every nerve had reached the exhaustion point as from some prolonged physical ordeal.

Her sense of unreality persisted. The

drunken captain, the ceremony of marriage, which lacked any spiritual sanction, the passing of the nuns and Mother Lucinda, were vague as personages and events, like figures from a half-recalled romance. She did not understand.

Presently her mind grew more tranquil, and her habit of gentle acquiescence in whatever befell her asserted itself. Never in her life had Consuelo been forced to face a great problem or to think out the solution of some supremely perplexing enigma for herself. Life with the nuns had been ordered into a quiet routine of thought and act. The habit of trustfulness could not forsake the girl so soon. A mystical faith that something would provide for her calmed Consuelo now like the soothing effect of a caressing word. Her taut hands relaxed, her arms dropped to her sides, her eyes became heavy and she fell asleep.

The guards quarreled in the hall but she did not hear them.

She was awakened by the sun shining in her eyes and a loud buzzing overhead. A huge langosta had entered the room and as the insect blundered about seeking egress, its long emerald green body and chromatic wings flashed like a curious fire, Consuelo struggled to her feet, waving her hands to drive the intruder from her cell.

Someone began to knock at the door. It was the splendid lieutenant.

"Good morning, señora," he said. "The señor Capitan is waiting and requests that you accompany me as quickly as possible. Can you be ready soon, señora?"

The girl murmured a yes, and hastily gathered together her few possessions into a little handbag made of an alligator's skin that she used to carry with her when, several years before, she visited her uncle during vacations from the convent school.

Although her sense of unreality had not wholly disappeared, although it was strange to hear men's voices in the convent, to miss the morning prayers, the mass, the exposition, her habit of ac-

cepting all that was imposed upon her already gave her a certain calm.

"I am married," she thought. "The young man calls me *señora*. That is strange!"

The nuns and the novitiates had never spoken of marriage, but in the convent school some of the girls described the men they intended to marry, and occasionally, in the dormitories, one or another of them would read chapters aloud from a smuggled, romantic book. Even Consuelo had dreamed a little, vaguely, of romance.

For a moment, now, the vague dreams of a former time returned to her, but they were without significance, for she had conceived a lover suppliant and adoring, to whom she condescended in a queenly way, whereas the man with the great moustaches, who claimed her now, had come without supplications, suddenly, like a fate.

She followed the ornate lieutenant out into the plaza; the plaza was full of soldiers. A band was playing. They walked in silence.

At the headquarters Consuelo was left to wait in a small room whose other occupant was a stoop-shouldered orderly, consuming, like a conflagration, a great number of cigarettes. From time to time he stared at Consuelo through the smoke cloud that enveloped his large face like a nebulous halo. She sat on a straight chair, with her eyes cast down, patiently, and somewhat frightened.

Then she found that Captain Bermudez had entered the room. His moustaches were waxed, his uniform immaculate, his heavy figure had lost its slouch and his features their sagging laxity. He was frowning and he stared at the girl as if he sought not only to examine her physical person, but to search out the innermost secrets of her heart.

"What is your name?" he asked.

She raised her face; her brown hair fell back in a gentle wave from her white forehead enveloping the tops of her small ears. Her sensitive lips trembled a little.

S. S.—Sept.—8

"Consuelo, señor."

"Do you know that you are married to me?"

"Yes, señor. . ."

"Do you know that I was drunk when I married you?"

She did not reply; in her unsophistication she found no appropriate comment.

Bermudez emitted an explosive grunt and his moustaches rose and fell sharply with the expulsion of his breath.

"I see she is stupid," he muttered to himself. "What a swinish mess!"

For several seconds he continued to stare at Consuelo with a morose frown and then he said:

"You have everything with you that you intend to take along? Well then, we'll go very shortly. We are leaving the city this morning. We're going home."

She was too shy and much too frightened to ask for any details that might enlighten her. She wondered why her husband seemed so displeased. Was this the habit of men when they married? The girls in the convent school had spoken of it differently, but this was the reality; the girls were mistaken.

III

It was not until after they reached La Guaira and embarked in the sailboat waiting for them that Consuelo began to learn something more definite about their plans and what she might expect. Captain Bermudez had secured his release from the army and was returning to his *hato* near the village of Valera. Three ex-soldiers, *llaneros* from his ranch, accompanied them and did the work of sailing the little boat.

It was scarcely larger than a balandra. A single mast upheld the huge mainsail, the jibsail seemed disproportionately small. There was a tiny cabin half filled with the boxes and trapping of the captain, and in this close space Bermudez smoked bulging native cigars, and the acrid smoke made

Consuelo cough whenever she descended from the deck and entered.

The first day he ignored her. When she stood on deck he looked over her head at the sea, and the coast sprinkled with lonely palms, which was seldom out of sight. In the cabin he seemed to look through her, as if she were invisible. He swore at the *llaneros* and kicked them about the deck like beasts. Consuelo was afraid and pitied them.

The second day they passed Puerto Cabello. Consuelo no longer felt ill from the abrupt jerk and pitch of the sloop. She pondered upon the moroseness of el Capitan and discovered, in a mystical way, that she was bound by certain duties to him. He was not what she had supposed husbands to be, but she accepted him completely, now, and felt that she must begin to make herself a wife to him.

He was standing on the deck, staring off into the Caribbean like a pirate searching the sea for prey. She went down into the cabin. The disorder of the tiny, cubic space astonished her! El Capitan had half unpacked one of his military boxes, a miscellany of clothes and impedimenta were strewn over the bunks, the two chairs and the floor like an amorphous flora growing up after the manner of fungi in a single hour. His uniforms were lying about disastrously, several pairs of *alpargatas* were turned soles up on the floor, papers and maps were strewn under the bunks like salvaged documents from a fire. It was astonishing!

Consuelo's habit of orderliness rebelled. She piled up the papers into a neat bundle, she arranged the shoes against the wall, she folded the coats and trowsers and laid them on top of the boxes. In handling these masculine things she experienced a touch of shame and a curious emotion, a sort of sweet thrill. The coats, the vests, smelling of tobacco, were mysterious to her. Her pale face flushed a little and she smiled. El Capitan would discover that he had a wife! A vaguely caressing hope gave birth to a vista of sweet emotions, like a fog lifting in the

night and leaving the darkness less impenetrable.

She heard him tramp across the deck and descend into the cabin. He stood in the door and stared at the results of her ministrations. His great moustaches stood out like pointed knives from his lips, his black eyes gleamed like beads.

"Carramba!" he cried. "What is this mischief!"

With a stride he crossed the cabin, flung the folded uniforms upon the floor, kicked over the neatly piled documents, upset a can of tobacco into the bunk. Consuelo regarded him with the terrified fascination of a bird enamoured of a snake. Her breast grew tight from fear.

He seized her wrists and gripped upon them until the pain brought tears into her eyes.

"Por Dios!" he said. "Don't meddle in my things again! I'm not drunk all the time. Don't stare at me like a fish. Did the nuns ever beat you? Well, I'll teach you what a beating is like!"

He did not execute his threat, but abandoned her again, ignored her once more, and seated himself on one of the boxes, stuffing tobacco into the bowl of a great pipe. Consuelo ran out to the deck in consternation. The *llaneros* were laughing a little. She did not observe them, but looked off at the remote coastline. The threat of physical violence did not dismay her, since she had no experience of violence, but her failure to understand the mystery of el Capitan, her inability to please him, weighed upon her like a catastrophe.

Why did he frown and glower? Perhaps he was ill; he did not look happy. If he were ill she might be able to help him, and so she began to pity him, found herself softened by compassion, and desired to return into the cabin and talk with him. But to do this she was afraid.

In two days they entered the gulf of Maracaibo, and the excessive heat oppressed Consuelo, who was only accustomed to the cool altitude of Caracas, but she was charmed by the distant vista of cocoanut palms, and the tropi-

cal forests beyond, seductive and vast, like a barbarian horde encamped close upon the civilization of the coast.

They stopped at Maracaibo and took in a fresh supply of water.

Then they proceeded south into the lake and the heat seemed to increase with every hour. Consuelo felt sick and very lonely. She tried to speak to el Capitan but he grunted at her and walked away. Surely he was unhappy! Again she pitied him, losing the thought of her own discomfort in the perplexity of how to serve him.

The boat put in at La Ceiba and here a *carro* was waiting for them and they jolted along the dirt road whilst the *llaneros* walked behind. The oxen tossed their heads in heavy exasperation at the mosquitos, the two big wheels buried themselves in the sandy stretches, flocks of gaudy parrots settled down into the fields of grain. Late in the afternoon they reached the *hato*.

The whitewashed house was shaded by a dozen palms; beyond, the herds of cattle moved over the plains in diminished perspective, and the town of Valera lay in miniature in the evening sunlight. Consuelo had never seen the plains. The herds of cattle astonished her, the *llaneros* riding bareback seemed about to dash headlong into death, but she exclaimed with delight as a family of monkeys chattered down at her from one of the palms.

A native servant took her little bag and addressed her as *señora*, showing her a deference, and suddenly she found herself proud; el Capitan was a great man here, the plains were his own, and she was his wife.

But she found no way to approach him or to achieve an intimacy. He ignored her, almost as completely as before. Once, as he returned from a trip to Valera, he found her standing on the veranda, dressed in one of her white frocks, and something made him smile at her. She warmed gratefully to his smile. He stood looking at her, forgetting to frown, observing her curiously, as if he had never quite estimated her face and person before. A curious

expectancy stirred her, a little thrill warmed her like a shaft of the sunlight, she felt her cheeks growing red. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he went into the house.

Sometimes she scarcely saw him for days. During his absence the administrator had managed his affairs badly, and he absorbed himself in enforcing discipline amongst the *llaneros*. He dragged them from their ponies, he kicked them headlong into the fields of gamelote, he cursed and blasphemed incessantly. Consuelo was amazed at his violence, and shocked at his blasphemy, but she marvelled at his courage. Even when she pitied one of his victims, she experienced an irrational thrill in the spectacle of his brutality and strength.

Once, when he threatened her, she trembled with commingled terror and delight and a strange flush possessed her in the instant thought that he might lay hands upon her, bruise her, hurt her. She felt instinctively that violence might destroy the barrier of his indifference. She longed for an immolation. But he did not beat her.

At first, when she was not engaged with her perplexing uncertainties, she used to sit and wonder what had happened to the nuns, the other novitiates, the superiors. But in the end she could not remain inactive and so she began to visit Valera and made friends with the women of the village. She tended their children whilst they beat up the corn; she helped carry the old men and women into the sun.

The natives marvelled at her sweetness. It astonished them to find her so helpful without a reason, and after their first emotions of distrust they began to regard her with a touch of affectionate superstition. Her spotless white frocks reminded them of sacerdotal mysteries, they found her saintly, and little by little they conceived her as a being endowed with something more than the utmost of purely human goodness.

In the end el Capitan was enraged by his discovery of her activities. He came upon her one afternoon as she was helping a native woman knead up hominy,

and when the native woman observed his face she fled into her hut. Bermudez seized Consuelo by the arm and dragged her into the road. He swung her upon his horse, and galloped off to the *hato*. She could hear him breathing hard behind her, and she trembled with puzzled fear and astonishment.

He pulled her into the house, thrust her violently into her room, entered himself and slammed the door shut. Then he glared and grimaced at her. He made the faces of a villain in a melodrama. He bared his teeth, he contracted his brows, he lowered his head like a bull.

"Eh, señora!" he growled. "Are you a peon's slave? You don't know your name, but a beating will teach you your duties! If I find you in such familiarities again, I'll feed you on corn meal and water for a month!"

She waited to be struck in a sort of torturing elation. His brutality made her shrink, and his immense strength, revealed in his thick neck and heavy shoulders, thrilled her. But he only advanced a single step, then turned and left the room abruptly. He locked the door and did not release her until morning.

IV

SHE did not venture into Valera again until after the epidemic had stricken the village with its plague. The yellow fever came suddenly, following an unusually wet season when the mosquitos bred in astonishing numbers. In a week no more than half the *llaneros* were in the saddle. The cattle wandered away from the range, the grain remained uncut, the churchbells in Valera tolled incessantly with the service of the dead. Bermudez was scarcely ever in the house; he rode about the *hato* like a centaur, inseparable from his horse, untiring, and blaspheming against bad fortune.

At last, overwhelmed with the necessity of giving aid, Consuelo went down to the village. A woman, her straight, black hair falling wildly over her shoulders, rushed out of one of the huts and

threw her arms about the girl. Her face was distorted, her eyelids swollen from weeping, her body sagged with despair.

"Santa! santa!" she cried, in the extremity of her misfortune. "Misericordia! Save my *niño*."

Consuelo followed her into the hut and found a child dying upon a pallet. The face was a deep yellow, the lips were black with dark blood, he scarcely breathed. With an emotion of deep compassion and hopelessness, Consuelo sat down beside the pallet and wiped the congealed stain from his lips. Meanwhile the woman, half mad, wept and complained, and told of her losses—her man, her two other children, the old father. It was appalling!

A great oppression settled upon Consuelo's spirits like a palpable and nearly unsupportable weight. Life was suddenly revealed to her as a misery, as a succession of tragic misfortunes, and into the concept was woven the enigma of her own life; it was the distressing certainty she discovered behind all her perplexities. The wailing of the mother completed, like a counterpoint, the sombre orchestration of her thoughts.

The afternoon passed and still she sat beside the dying boy. It occurred to her once that el Capitan had probably missed her, but she did not stir. She sat in a lethargy, profound, like a prostrating disease. From time to time she wiped the blood from the child's lips. The mother wept in the corner.

She lost count of time, but sometime in the night she discovered that the boy was dead. Glancing swiftly across the room she saw that his mother had fallen asleep, huddled in the corner, her head sunk upon her bosom, her long hair falling like a banner of sable grief across her face. Consuelo arose softly and left the hut.

She walked back to the *hato*, slowly, half alive. She felt sure that el Capitan would beat her now, perhaps he would kill her, but the thought no longer stirred her emotions. She passed beneath the palms and ascended the steps of the veranda.

An old servant met her at the door. His aged figure trembled with agitation; he was incoherent for a moment.

"Madre de Dios!" he cried. "At last! Ah, señora, he is very bad. It is a calamity! Go in and pray for him; you have a saint's way. What a disaster!"

Consuelo stared, uncomprehending for the first moment, and then she understood. Her lethargy departed like the going of a ghost, her senses were inflamed with emotion. She ran into the house, flung open the door of Bermudez's room, and reached his bedside breathlessly.

His eyes were open but he did not seem to see her. When had he been stricken? In the morning he had ridden out as usual!

She pressed her hand upon his forehead and found it burning hot. The eyes were bloodshot, the pupils contracted, a yellowish tinge lay under the tan of his cheeks. His great moustaches hung limp over his lips.

The spectacle of his prostration appalled her, the sight of his human frailty aroused her instant commiseration. At once she pictured him as she had always known him, tireless, amazingly vital, brutal, strong, and seeing him now, motionless, helpless, the tears filled her eyes.

All night she placed cold cloths upon his forehead, she held up his head from the pillow whilst he drank mixtures of water and lime, she administered huge portions of chiquichique. Toward morning he closed his eyes and slept. The fever was undiminished.

During the day Consuelo alternately attended him and dozed from exhaustion. She persisted in her treatment, she despaired of the fever and was terrified by the jaundice, but she held him as before whilst he swallowed the lime and water.

Toward evening she dozed again and awoke with a start of fear. She discovered that el Capitan was awake and staring at her. His black eyes were opened more widely, and he seemed sensible now of her presence.

She placed her hand on his head.

With a thrill of delight she perceived that the fever was nearly gone. The jaundice indeed was diminished. He was recovering!

He still stared at her.

Moving his lips several times, he succeeded in speaking at last, and growled in a whisper:

"What are you doing here, *mujer*?"

She was not hurt by his roughness; she only smiled.

"Get out!" he growled again.

She hesitated, she was about to obey, and then, turning back from her obedience, she smiled at him once more. He was helpless, his great strength had deserted him, he was a child in her hands, her own child—she was the master! Ah, he had need of her, and being needful, he no longer puzzled and astonished her. She approached the bed and touched his forehead again.

At her touch, he attempted to rise in the bed, he raised his hands feebly and at once she seized his shoulders and pushed him back upon the pillow. He could resist no more than a feather, and as she bent over him, pushing him back, she looked straight into his eyes.

The brutality had gone out of his eyes, and she observed, wondering herself, a touch of wonder there, as if a sudden astonishment had replaced all other emotions in his heart. They looked at each other and then, under the spell of a swift, uncomprehended urge, she thrust her hands under his head, lifted his face a few inches from the pillow, and compelled by a romantic necessity, she kissed his lips.

A strange and sweet emotion came to her with the kiss. She felt a sudden sense of fulfillment and that now, at last, she had discovered the means to make him accept her as his wife! She thrilled with the knowledge of discovery. She kissed him again, he could not resist. She looked into his eyes once more and he looked back, with an immense wonder in his gaze.

"Give me a little water," he whispered at last, and as he closed his fingers around the glass she felt him press her hand, feebly, accepting her.

Echo of Summer

By Paul Tanaquil

THE woods are lyrical with echoings
Of summer's music. Soft and far away
A nightingale, bidding farewell to Day,
Sings ancient roses and forgotten things;
The woods are lyrical. About them clings
Remembered words they heard young lovers say
In whisperings, when hearts make holiday
And deem themselves unheard. The evening flings
A gossamer mauve veil over the trees,
The pale moon crooks his slender argent finger
Against the bluish sky. Down in the dell
Darkness bends over, as though memories
Bid it lie on the ground awhile to linger
In thought on secrets that it will not tell. . . .



THE one good thing about polygamy is that a man isn't always scolded
in the same key.



AWNING—a combustible contrivance for catching lighted cigarette
stubs.



NEIGHBORS—the people who sympathize with your wife.



The Last Will of Stephen Forsby

By Thyra Samter Winslow

STEPHEN FORSBY was dying and he knew it. As he had been dying for two months and probably had another month of dying in store—even now his life was being prolonged by artificial means through the skill of nurses and doctors—he was not greatly surprised.

Stephen was seventy-two. He was glad that science could spin out the thin thread of his life, though it mean no more than lying in bed and talking with people he cared nothing about. Still, it was life. He did not suffer a great deal, and save when he had had a hypodermic injection to induce sleep, was usually conscious.

The thought of dying occasionally filled Stephen with terror. He hated to think of letting go the things he was used to—the certainties of life—and he was a little afraid of the dying itself, the physical pain. Most of the time, however, he looked forward rather with a thought of relief to getting away from things—to a comfortable oblivion.

Only once in a while did he have a vague feeling that there might be something to this dying business after all, that maybe your soul or whatever it was might float out of your body and come back and write stupid, useless things for fat, brainless women on Ouija boards. Usually, he was quite sure, as he always had been, that there was nothing to it. You go out—die, and it's over. Of course. It was not death that was bothering him. It was life. More than just life. It was Belle, his wife.

Stephen hated Belle. He knew, now, from years of observation, that most men hate their wives—and, for that matter, that most wives hate their husbands.

He hated Belle. He quite knew that Belle hated him. Now, at any minute, his lawyer was coming in. He was going to have a new will drawn up. He was going to get even with Belle!

He had not made a will in years—since he was a young man. It was about time he was making one, now. Everyone, Belle even, had been urging him to make the will and he had been putting it off. Belle wouldn't have urged it if she had known what he intended to put in it. He knew. He was going to get even with Belle. He'd not leave her anything—or just enough to make it impossible for her to break the will.

He'd show Belle! He could make a will like that. He'd found out. There had been a pre-nuptial payment which forfeited Belle's dower right. Her family had got that money and had spent it, years before. They were dead, now, Belle's family, an awful father, an impossible brother. He was glad of that.

Why had he married her? He should have known better—at fifty-four. Had they been married that long—eighteen years? A long time. Well, it had been a long time for Belle, too. He had been married to Mary twelve years. That seemed no time at all. And Mary had been dead a long, long time. Mary had been a nice little thing, quiet, loving—a bit stupid when you told her things and with a way of looking at you—staring at anything—with her mouth open. But Mary was dead over thirty years. He'd never have made this kind of a will if Mary had lived. He'd have left everything to her—and inside of two years folks with fake schemes would have wormed it all away from her. Mary

had been soft, easy. Maybe it was just as well the way things were.

Why had he married Belle? After fifty, one doesn't really fall in love. Belle had been young, then. Maybe it was her youth that he married her for. That was it. Belle had told him he was young. Young at fifty! Fifty seemed young, now, but of course Belle at thirty had not felt that way about age. And now, Belle, herself, was fifty—awfully near.

Belle had married him for money, of course. He had always known that. There had never been any secret about it. But it had seemed miraculous, then, that money could buy a woman like Belle. It had seemed impossible. That's why he had felt that it must have been partly for himself—for his own charms—that Belle had married him. His own charms! But he had fooled her. He had kept on living—living—eighteen years.

They hadn't been bad, those eighteen years, as life goes. He had got a lot out of them—the business—things happening. He had been awfully happy the first few years, proud of Belle, her beauty, her personality, his ability to dress her in lovely frocks and show her off.

She'd been a beauty at thirty, no question about that. Not the new kind of beauty, those little skinny girls that look as if a good puff of wind would get the best of them. She was a big woman, even then, with a well-rounded figure. But with her blonde hair and her way of carrying herself she well looked the part of a rich man's wife. He'd been able to give her everything and she'd been poor enough before. That was certain. Poor and cheap. How she'd altered—put on airs and an affected accent—and ways. How he hated her!

After the will was read, when he was dead—he'd have his revenge. He'd get even for all of the things she'd done, little things, for her hating him, watching for him to die. What could she do at fifty, without money, without even enough to live on? That would be revenge. Since she was thirty she'd done

nothing—eighteen years of getting soft. He couldn't have planned a better revenge if he had wanted to.

There was a knock at the door. The white-clad nurse at the window rose and answered it.

She took something, closed the door with exaggerated care, came over to him.

"It's the book from Mr. Johnson," she told him. "I'll start reading it any time you like. He said it was very good."

"Not now," he growled, "Harper'll be in at any minute. You or Brooks can start it tomorrow."

What a nurse! Why hadn't they got him a good-looking one? Belle had probably chosen her. Such a flat-faced nurse—and yet her nose wasn't flat. A flat-faced nurse with a beak nose. It seemed preposterous—and yet she was—and flat-footed, too—and walked sharply, like knife-whacks. What a nurse to die with! And the pictures you saw of good-looking nurses putting delicate hands on fevered brows! Her hands were heavy, like her feet, and yet clammy and sharp, too. An unpleasant creature, not stiffly starched enough for crispness, too heavily clad for daintiness. Why couldn't he have a fresh nurse, a young nurse with light tendrils of hair about her face? Yet she was the fourth he had had, and she was quiet, anyhow. Ugh, what a nurse—like his own life—!

There was Brooks, too. What a secretary! Still, he was a good one as secretaries go. Why did young men become secretaries at all? A young man, a strong, able-bodied young man to learn shorthand and take down business letters, fawning at his employers, going on errands—doing the bidding of others with pretended eagerness to please! A girl's job! All right for a girl. Miss Morrow had been a great little secretary, a pretty girl, too. If he'd been younger, maybe she would have cared for him. There was a girl, pretty and fresh and clever! But she'd resigned to get married.

Not that he blamed her. No fun, taking dictation all day in a business

office from an old man. He'd never spoken to her, much, outside of routine work, yet how he had longed to take her hand, smooth her hair. There was a girl, soft, pleasant, clean-looking! She'd never looked at him, of course. He was an old man, going to die. Oh, well, even Belle had been good-looking at thirty.

Belle! He was going to get even. He could see her, now, when the will was read, a startled uncomprehension coming into her dull, yet crafty face. What could she do? Nothing. He'd see to it. He'd have the will written so it couldn't be broken. She could fuss and fume all she wanted to. It wouldn't help a bit. How mad she'd be! She'd try to have the will broken, hire lawyers, talk it over with her friends, with everyone. The will he'd make couldn't be broken. He'd fix that.

II

THE knob on the door turned. Belle came in. Was he never free from her? He would be, soon enough, now. Why didn't she knock before entering, as the others did? He'd tried to get the nurse to have her do it. She wouldn't.

She was dressed for the street. Stephen laughed to himself when he remembered that she had been beautiful, to him at least, at thirty. She didn't quite look her age. He knew that. Still, she was getting fatter—and how carefully she dieted! Couldn't ever eat the things she cared about—and how she loved to eat. What a joke on Belle that was. Still she would do it—keep from eating, something she loved to do—to chase after a lost youth.

Belle was well dressed. Stephen admitted that. Her plain tailored suit helped her figure—a distorted reminiscence of what it once had been—as well as it could be helped. The sables thrown across her shoulders, high at the neck, took away some of the thickness of chin and throat, all too obvious in an evening gown. Why shouldn't she dress well? She spent enough money. Stephen knew that. He had never cared about the money—that was part of the bargain.

He had to smile at Belle, now. She still thought she was beautiful—a woman beautiful at fifty! There *could* be women beautiful at fifty—Stephen admitted that—wonderfully beautiful—but not in Belle's way, not in a sex way, not by means of henna and peroxide and hair waving and massage and corsets. At fifty a woman ought to tone down to simple things, to motherly things, soft and gentle and gracious—a halo of graciousness and gentility. Belle—motherly!

She stood at his bed, now, and asked him, in her well-modulated voice, the cultivated voice with just a suggestion of the old rasp in it—how he felt. Waited, then, with a sympathetic smile, as he growled that he felt "about the same"; clasped, with a dreadful sentiment, his hand that lay upon the cover. Asked if she could do anything for him while she was out—she was going to drive through the park for an hour or so, then attend to some little things. A few minutes more of bed-room chatter—she was gone.

III

THAT was over. She wouldn't come in, until evening, anyhow. How tiresome she was! How he hated her brisk cordiality, her attempts at loving cheerfulness that succeeded in deceiving everyone, the nurses, the doctors, the servants—what a devoted wife she seemed—devoted to the husband who was about to die. She'd be surprised enough, when she heard the will.

There were circles under her eyes—wouldn't Belle worry if she knew how badly they showed! Dark circles under her eyes and wrinkles at the corners of them—and her eyes, themselves, were starting to fade a little. They looked light contrasted with the pencil she applied under them. Her chin was fat and puffed and so was her throat. The sables hid that. Sables and silk crêpe. How much finer and more delicate they were than the things they covered!

Stephen knew that he himself was hideously thin, sallow and wasted. But

he was an old man and about to die. Belle was fifty and healthy and expected to live years more as a rich widow.

Why, she thought herself beautiful even now! The casual observer, even her friends, thought her a fine-looking woman. She was, in a way. She was tall and carried herself well. Her hair was always correctly coiffured, crisply waved, a net holding every hair stiffly in place. Her complexion was massaged and rouged. It was only when you looked closely, when you knew her, that you saw the too-full and yet hollow cheeks . . . the puffs and wrinkles about the eyes . . . how hard her mouth was.

She was still a well set-up figure. Stephen had seen, just a few months before, men turn in admiration to look at her—tall, distinguished, well-groomed. She'd find another husband—if he left her his money—how she and her second husband would laugh over him as they spent it! But she wouldn't get his money.

IV

HE looked at the watch on his wrist. Harper was late. He hoped the doctor wouldn't come first. Such a stupid fellow. He liked his old physician better, but this was a specialist. He knew his profession, evidently. Belle may have secretly preferred a faker, someone who could not have kept him alive these months—but she was too careful—too particular about what the world would say—to attempt anything like that. The doctor was all right, as doctors go, but a stupid fellow, with an affectedly cheerful bedside manner and a weak chin which he covered with a little, pointed, reddish beard—a squirrel of a fellow with little bright eyes. What a way to die!

Stephen looked around the room. It was a large room, the largest bed-room in the house. It hadn't been generosity on Belle's part, giving it to him. She had preferred the location of the suite she had chosen for herself and the guest rooms were on the floor above. Off Stephen's bed-room were his dressing-

room and bath, though the nurses used his dressing-room now. There was no possibility of his needing it again.

His room, the room he had to die in, definitely displeased him. He had liked all of the other rooms he had ever occupied much more. He thought of some of them—the little attic room he had had at home, when he was a boy, with its old-fashioned blue painted set, bought at second-hand—he had always liked that. Other rooms, too—the first rented room he had had when he came to New York, bleak enough with its one window looking out on a dismal court, but at least his own. Bachelor rooms, then—decidedly good he had thought them, with mission furniture and leather cushions.

Then, after his marriages, first, the rather stiff mahogany room he had occupied with Mary—other rooms—and now this. Ugh! He hated it. It was Belle's, not his. Belle's decorator, her last one, an awful creature with watery eyes and a nasal voice, had insisted that the master of the house must have Italian Renaissance. It was as unalterable a fact as that the mistress must have Louis Seize. But of course Belle liked dainty enamels and laces.

He could see her, now, lying on the chaise-lounge in her bed-room, its lovely cover of lace and chiffon tossed over her—careless, crêpe clad, with silken mules on her too-broad feet—as she glanced at the latest number of a society weekly or read the smart fashion magazines.

Belle took to luxury. She had never got into society or anything worthy of the name. She went with—tried to drag him along—a group of too-rich spenders who lacked taste and discrimination and culture. Not that *he* had them. But he liked a good book once in a while or some music, not too much, and quiet and peace at home. Or a friend or two who could talk business or politics or "what's-the-world-coming-to." But of course he had been old for a long time.

Stephen disliked Italian Renaissance things, mostly, perhaps, because Belle thought them "the proper thing." To

Belle, Italian Renaissance was a style of furniture, quite as Colonial or Adam were styles of furniture. It was a name. She knew nothing of its significance, its relation to anything under the sun.

So he had Italian Renaissance furniture in his room because Belle and a simpering decorator had chosen it. There must be good profit in decoration, especially in reproducing a room after the manner in vogue in Italy in the sixteenth century. He hated the long chest, the candlesticks, the dull, heavy tapestries and velvet hangings, the stiff, uncomfortable heavy chairs, the great bed raised on a dais as if he already lay in state dead.

Yet he had not rebelled. It was Belle's plan, the house, from the start. He had let her have her way. He had not cared especially then—he'd had his business, outside things, life.

Now, lying here, it seemed to matter a great deal. What he wanted in a room was all wrong, of course, artistically. The snivelling young decorator would have told him so—a comfortable chair or two, a place for a few books, a comfortable bed, a lamp. No taste, of course. Well, he had let Belle have her way. Now—he'd have his—where there's a will there's a way! He thought that saying good, used like that.

He grinned.

He knew a way to get even with Belle.

V

He didn't know why he hated Belle. She'd never done anything—except wait for him to die. If she'd had flirtations with other men he had never known about them. Perhaps she hadn't. She was awfully conventional—and to have had a flirtation would have meant to have given something, affection, with only affection in return.

That wasn't like Belle. She valued herself higher than that. Mere affection in return for affection would never have been enough for her. Maybe she had been true to him—in that way.

She'd expected him to die, long before this, of course—years before, had waited, watched for it, politely, decently, almost elegantly. That's not why he hated her. He hated her for being, for existing at all, for her fatness, her smugness, her polite graciousness, her stolidity, her slyness, her thickness. She reminded him of a great white worm—or the kind of worm you almost bite into—sometimes do, though you'll never let on—when you eat an apple. That was it—an apple worm! A fat, white apple worm! He'd get even, now.

He could imagine the will being read. If he only could be there. Harper, decent, smug, bustling. His secretary, more eager now than cringingly deferential, the servants—they'd probably read it aloud, in the house, immediately following the funeral. And all any of them cared about was money—his money. Not him nor what his life had meant even to himself, but money. He'd give to the servants, even to Brooks—to show he was in his right mind—and then—charities—an orphans' home—a home for cripples—he had a list of them ready now for Harper.

He didn't want to help anyone, especially—he had always been grafted from, was always writing cheques for one thing or another—little enough of the money ever got to those for whom it was solicited—but as long as the money was there it was just as well—it was keeping the money away from Belle, anyhow. How surprised she'd be—shocked out of her fat dignity. Not even enough to live on!

Of course she'd try to break the will—but she couldn't. He'd see that Harper would attend to that.

Still, Belle was a smart woman, smart about some things—hadn't she married him? And she was a woman—a woman in court—crazy—that was it—they'd say he was crazy. . . .

Suddenly other pictures came to Stephen—and they would not go away. Not the comforting picture of Belle, amazed and horrified at learning that she would not get his money, but scenes in court and other places, any place, his friends.

They wouldn't just nod and say, "Well, I see old Forsby's gone," or "Yes, poor old Forsby." They'd talk about him—"a queer nut—out of his head—sure she can break it—he must have led her an awful life—well, she stuck to him to the last—never murmured even—no, never suspected it—"

And Belle, talking it over with her friends—how she would talk—how she had sacrificed for him, loved him, did for him—her best years, since she was thirty—her best years—and now, this.

She'd pretend reticence—"he had been, well, unbalanced, of course, for a long time"—she'd tell things, bits about him, things he had done, queer things—the boy he had taken home to adopt and sent back to the farm three months later "because he wanted the boy to have a decent chance at things"—other things, servants he'd discharged for trifles, his temper, funny things he had said—witnesses to prove them. . . .

And the judge—Belle was a woman—in black she'd look even better than she looked now—Belle, in mourning, with a little less rouge and an appealing smile; Belle, with stories of his cruelty, his insanity. . . .

The witnesses, discharged employees telling about his peculiarities—things he'd said—done—little, forgettable things, usual things any old man might say or do. . . .

It would be Belle who would be glorified—a good wife to him for eighteen years—putting up with the eccentricities of an old man—a queer old man—an invalid, full of weird fancies, a half-crazy old man—Belle, the devoted widow—he, queer, mad, everybody would remember his odd deeds—things anyone would do—and she'd break the will in the end—if she didn't—but she *would*—and she'd be glorified, a lovely, sacrificing creature—he a crazy, broken old man.

In life Belle had dictated, smothered him. In death he had wanted, thought, he could get away. His death was to be a revenge for the years he had lived with her. He wouldn't let her rule him after death, too.

Another knock. Harper. He came

to the bed crisply, a short, stout man of sixty, in a gray salt-and-pepper suit—Harper's suits always seemed more important than the man.

"What about this will?" he chuckled, as he always chuckled in grave moments. "A youngster like you making a new will! Of course, if you insist on it. I've the usual form made out, ready for the bequests. Hartley and Jonas are outside—better to have witnesses like that than a servant or two—you agree with me?"

VI

ONE was always forced to agree with Harper. Still, Harper was a decent enough fellow.

Stephen nodded, wearily. He was tired. He didn't know why. For years now—years—he had planned his will—this last will—revenge on Belle. The thoughts of it had given him a great deal of happiness. Well, after all, they had given him happiness—he had had that.

Hartley and Jonas came in. Couldn't they have waited outside until the signature? After all, what difference did it make?

Harper and he talked. Harper read the form aloud to him. How stupid it sounded. . . . "in the name of God, Amen—of the age of seventy-two—being of sound, disposing mind and memory, do hereby make, publish and declare this to be my last will and testament, that is to say—"

What senseless phrases; law was like that, a tangle of words to say simple things.

" . . . first, I direct that all my just debts . . . paid and fully satisfied . . ."

" . . . I give and devise . . ."

He had named small bequests—to servants, to old friends now needy, to small charities—there was no one else, not one person who would thrill at a gift from him because it was from him. Money—money—money—what a life!

There wasn't even much more left of life. And, after he was dead . . . revenge? The laughter and ridicule of those who had known him—derision—a poking into his past life—a great sympa-

thy with Belle, the poor woman who had lived with an insane man— And he had planned that—for revenge.

Harper was asking more questions. He was answering. Then Harper was reading again.

He listened, as if to a voice a long way off—he signed his name—the witnesses signed their names. He had made his will.

With unctuous bows and hopes for his recovery—Harper chuckling, "the will was not at all necessary, yet of course it's a nice thing to have over with, you agree with me?"—the men went out.

VII

WELL, the will was written. Revenge

on Belle! He smiled sardonically. Well, it had been fun—planning. He had had that. Revenge—why—he had had his revenge. He had had his revenge on Belle by *living*—he had lived eighteen years after his marriage to her—and Belle was fifty now.

The will—what else could he have done? He was an old man, a sick old man about to die. What a way to die! He smiled again as he thought how far from framing his real wishes this will was. No one would ever know. His will—the clause about Belle:

"—I give and bequest unto my beloved wife, Belle Martin Forsby, all the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, both real and personal, of every name and nature and wheresoever situated, absolutely and forever."



I Have Cursed Winter

By John R. McCarthy

I HAVE cursed winter when the moon was white
Between white clouds above the white, white snow;
I have cursed winter for his howling death
And for his silent death
And for his fear.

I have cursed sorrow when no tears would come
To ease the smarting of the dry, dry eyes;
I have cursed sorrow for her vanity
And for her emptiness
And for her strength.

Yet on the winds of winter I have come
To April, flowered-eyed;
And on the sands of sorrow I have crept
To the clear spring of joy.



Monsieur Jerome

By John McClure

MONSIEUR JEROME is as frail as a seven-months child. He is very old now, and he keeps a bookshop. It is a famous bookshop in its way, but that is nothing to Monsieur Jerome. He is old and frail. He sits all day in his bookshop, hoping to sell a book, but when he sells one, he is unhappy.

Life is good in the eyes of Monsieur Jerome. Life has been very kind to him. He has loved it. His eyes are now as bright as they were half a century ago when he was young and sprightly. They twinkle mischievously. But his body is frail and his hair is white and he walks as slowly as an *ague*, leaning upon his cane. He is a little petulant now and then, for he is old and the world is worrisome, but he loves life none the less.

He nearly starved, once upon a time, because it is very difficult to sell books in a city where no one cares to read, but he is not in need any more of anything, not even of companionship, for he is too old for that. He sits all day in his bookshop, hoping to sell a book, and in the evening he walks slowly—almost unbelievably slowly, leaning upon his cane—over the old streets of the city which he has known for fifty years.

In his bookshop he reads. He sits on a little chair near the door with his legs crossed, rocking his foot, and reading the droll stories of Monsieur de Balzac.

On the streets in the evening he looks at the world. It is now as it was seventy-five years ago. The world is a picture-book. Monsieur Jerome moves up and down the old streets at twilight,

leaning upon his cane, so slowly that it seems he is not moving at all, and what he sees is the pictures. It is the flaming advertisements upon the bill-boards, gaudy in red and blue and yellow and brown. It is the pretty ladies smoking Egyptian cigarettes. It is Velvet Ice Cream and Boston Garters. It is High Life and Budweiser. It is the shop-windows.

All that is left to Monsieur Jerome is his memories and the pictures. He halts for long pauses in front of the shop-windows. He looks long and intensely at the shoes and the crockery and the bric-à-brac and the trinkets that shine and gleam in the illumination of electric lights. Up one street and down another Monsieur Jerome moves in the twilight, so slowly that he seems not to be walking at all. He never misses a picture, or a placard in colors, or a bill-board, or a shop-window. When it is quite dark, he goes home. I do not know where his home is.

And I do not know what Monsieur Jerome's memories are. I only know that, in his eyes, life has been very good to him, that it is too beautiful a thing to lose.

Monsieur Jerome is a pagan.

I saw him, the day before yesterday evening, at the threshold of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes. He seemed a small, frail, very old figure, Monsieur Jerome, dark against the background of twinkling candles and brilliant images at the far end of the nave. He stood, a little bent, somehow reminding me of a frail and very old fairy, with his small felt hat in his hand, leaning upon his cane. He seemed somehow fascinated like a wan-

dering elf, looking in upon the old religion, with the tinkling of the Holy Ghost in his ears, the glitter of candles in his eyes. He seemed to waver in the doorway.

I believe that Monsieur Jerome would have liked to go in. He stood for a long moment quite motionless, remembering, perhaps, with his hat in his hand, leaning upon his cane.

But Monsieur Jerome is a pagan, and much too sturdy a man—though he is frail as a child or a very old fairy—to surrender to fairy-tales. He straightened his shoulders. He raised his cane

from the floor. He turned very sturdily and walked out, with his hat in his hand. Outside, he set his hat defiantly upon his head. But he suddenly seemed to grow feeble and put his cane to the ground and walked off so slowly that he seemed not to be walking at all. Bye-and-bye he turned into the Rue de Bon Secours and faded into the twilight.

Yesterday Monsieur Jerome sat as usual in his bookshop on his little chair near the door, with his legs crossed, rocking his foot, and reading the pleasant Droll Stories of Monsieur de Balzac.



Let Us Remember

By Joan Walter

HOW can it matter what comes now,
Winter, and summer, and day and night;
Sorrow may tangle the paths we seek;
Let us remember we held delight.

Let us remember that once we two
Listened and quivered, and heard the call
Of the nesting bird, and the budding seed . . .
We have had happiness. That is all.



LOVE is the star men look up at as they walk along and marriage is the coal hole they fall into.



THE Bottle Cry of Freedom: *Hip, Hip, Hooray!*



Le Testament

By Michael Epyu

Nous étions entre amis intimes, l'autre jour, au cercle, et nous nous entretenions de ce pauvre Bodard si doux, bon et foncièrement honnête qui venait de faire un faux, dans un moment d'égarement inexplicable. . . . Presque tous, nous estimions que Bodard n'avait pu agir qu'en proie à une crise de folie. . . . Mais Maurice Vauzier, qui jusqu'alors était resté silencieux et tout enveloppé de la fumée de son énorme pipe, s'écria tout à coup :

— Ne concluez pas si vite, je vous en prie ! Car il y a des heures où les événements se liguent de telle sorte contre l'homme le plus sûr de lui, que, même en conservant toute sa lucidité d'esprit, il en arrive à commettre des actes délicieux et criminels. . . . Moi-même je serais passible de travaux forcés si . . . tout ne s'était arrangé. . . .

— Racontez ! Racontez ! cria-t-on tout autour de lui :

— Si vous voulez : J'avais trente-cinq ans. J'avais mené pendant huit ans, dans le centre africain, la terrible vie du colon pauvre qui veut vaincre le sort et conquérir de l'or. Malgré mon ardeur au travail et mes efforts surhumains, je n'avais pas encore bien réussi, lorsque mon oncle, Justin Maréchal, que vous avez tous connu, mourut en me laissant sa fortune, plus d'un million. J'abandonnai mes plantations de café et mes nègres et accourus à Paris. Peu de temps après, je me fiançai avec la riche Mlle. André, la fille du gros banquier. J'étais très épris de cette aristocratique et éblouissante fille, et je crois que, de son côté, elle avait de l'inclination pour le rude sauvage que j'étais devenu. A cause de mon deuil récent, il fut décidé

que notre mariage aurait lieu, dans l'intimité, au château de Beauvène, en Dauphiné, où les André passent toujours leur été. Je possédais moi-même, à une dizaine de kilomètres du château, la vieille maison de mon oncle Maréchal et j'allai l'habiter dès que ma future famille quitta Paris.

Les quelques semaines qui précédèrent notre mariage furent délicieuses. Nous faisons, ma fiancée et moi, de longues courses dans les montagnes voisines, et souvent nous arrivions l'un chez l'autre à cheval, de grand matin, pour nous revoir plus tôt, après nous être quittés la veille au soir ! Je n'insiste pas : nous savons tous quel âge d'or est cette période des fiançailles, quand le mariage n'est pas une simple affaire de convenance ou d'argent, mais une affaire de cœur.

La veille du jour où le contrat devait être signé, je rentrai chez moi en sifflant joyeusement. Ma poitrine était si gonflée de bonheur que je m'attardai, après la chute du jour, à ma fenêtre, pour savourer ces trop brèves délices et pour m'assurer, par un sérieux examen de conscience, que je pouvais m'abandonner sans remords à l'ivresse de cet amour jeune et beau qui devait illuminer toute ma vie. . . . Tout pénétré de ces sentiments poignants, je ne m'endormis que fort tard, et, après quelques minutes de sommeil, je fus réveillé par un bruit insolite. . . . J'allumai ma bougie j'aperçus alors un de ces énormes rats des champs qui avait pénétré par ma fenêtre ouverte. Je me levai, pour le chasser, mais au lieu de reprendre le chemin de la fenêtre, il se mit à grimper aux murs. . . . Ne trouvant pas

d'issue, il courait de côté et d'autre, lorsqu'il arriva à une étagère chargée de vieux livres empilés l'un sur l'autre et qu'il fit tomber en un pêle-mêle indescriptible. Je me penchai pour les ramasser, lorsque j'aperçus entre les feuillets d'un volume entr'ouvert, un papier sur lequel en grosses lettres noires était écrit : *Ceci est mon testament*. Je m'en saisis. Était-ce là le testament de mon oncle ? C'était de son écriture. Un double, sans doute. Je lus . . . Alors, je sentis mes jarrets fléchir sous moi, car je voyais que par ce testament mon oncle léguait tous ses biens à l'Assistance Publique.

Nul doute : J'étais ruiné. Je ne m'affo-lai pas. . . . Il me semblait seulement que mes vertèbres étaient de glace, mais je demeurai lucide et examinai minutieusement le document : il était en règle et sa date prouvait qu'il avait été écrit par mon oncle peu de semaines avant sa mort.

Je vous laisse imaginer ce qu'un homme jeune et ardent, sachant ce que coûte l'argent et qui est à la veille d'épouser une radieuse jeune fille qu'il aime de tout son cœur, peut ressentir en se découvrant pauvre comme Job !

Je comprenais d'une façon très nette que ma vie se brisait : Plus de fiancée magnifique, plus d'amis, plus rien ! Je n'avais qu'à retourner dans les forêts primitives, reprendre la lutte sauvage contre le climat, les hommes et les bêtes, me remettre en chasse. . . . Cela me faisait peur, parce que j'avais expérimenté cette vie pleine de privations et de souffrances.

Et puis, j'aimais ma fiancée et je savais que les belles héritières qui attendent un fiancé pendant cinq ou six ans sont plutôt rares. La mienne appartiedrait donc à quelque plat fils à papa. . . .

J'eus une crise de révolte farouche, je ne voulais pas accepter mon destin et je rôdais, les poings crispés, autour de ce papier maudit, comme une hyène autour d'un feu de campement. Alors, peu à peu, des profondeurs de ma substance, naquit et chemina vers mon vou-

loir une idée que je finis par considérer sans répugnance. J'étais seul. Sans ce sale rat, ce testament serait encore dans sa cachette. Pourquoi ne pas l'y remettre ? Ah, bien oui, pour que quelque domestique me l'apporte un jour, au beau milieu de ma félicité prochaine ? Non, il fallait le détruire. Il le fallait absolument. Et cette tentation fut plus forte que ma vieille honnêteté, que toute mon intègre conscience. . . . Je brûlai le testament, j'en anéantis les cendres.

Et, fébrile, les yeux hagards, je m'élançai au dehors.

L'aurore paraissait déjà. Une paix indicible, une sorte de religieuse et sainte tendresse, descendaient du ciel frais. . . . Je marchai vivement parmi les herbes pleines de rosée. . . . Tout d'un coup, le galop d'un cheval retentit, et ma fiancée, toute brillante de jeunesse, de beauté et d'amour, arriva près de moi.

Elle sauta à terre, jeta les rênes à son groom. . . .

—Qu'avez-vous donc ? me dit-elle en me prenant le bras.

. . . Il y avait à la fois tant de misère en moi et tant de beauté dans le ciel, tant de pureté dans les yeux de celle que j'aimais ! Je fus saisi de remords et lui avouai tout.

Elle fut merveilleusement forte et brave ; elle me jura qu'elle n'accepterait jamais de me rendre ma parole. Elle ne me quitta pas de toute la matinée, et vers onze heures, elle m'entraîna, comme une loque, vers le village, à l'étude du notaire chargé de préparer notre contrat.

Mais là, je me ressaisis : Sans avouer tout de suite mon acte criminel, je déclarai devant tout le monde que je connaissais un testament par lequel mon oncle léguait toute sa fortune à l'Assistance Publique et j'ajoutai :

—Cela changera tout, sans doute.

—Quelle est donc la date qui figure sur le document dont vous parlez ? demanda le notaire.

—La date du douze octobre dernier, dis-je.

—Eh bien, le testament qui est en ma possession, répondit-il, et qui vous institue héritier, a été signé en mon étude le premier décembre suivant. Tout document antérieur est donc nul. Je savais du reste que ce testament avait existé, mais je croyais qu'après avoir changé

d'avis, M. Maréchal l'avait détruit. . . .

Je n'écoutais plus l'excellent homme, car une joie si tumultueuse grondait en mon cœur que je dus me raccrocher aux épaules de mon futur beau-père et que je fermai un moment les yeux devant le bonheur revenu qui m'éblouissait.



The Face of the Skies

By George Sterling

WHO shall loose Orion's bands?

"I!" saith Eternity.

*"I with annulling hands
Shall set the Titan free."*

*Who shall erect upon the sky
New forms of might?*

*Saith Eternity: "I!
I shall re-people night."*

*"As a breath on glass,—
As witch-fires that burn,
The gods and monsters pass,
Are dust, and return."*

*"Is the toil much to you
That is nothing to me?
Such dreams the gods knew,"
Saith Eternity.*



THE difference between riches and poverty is the difference between car and car fare.



THE skin game: designing evening gowns.



The Place of Acting

By George Jean Nathan

I

"WHEN Mr. Nathan says that acting is not an art, of course he is talking arrant rot—who could doubt it, after witnessing a performance by the great Duse?" So, the estimable actor, Mr. Arnold Daly. Whether acting is or is not an art, it is not my concern at the moment to consider, yet I quote the *riposte* of Mr. Daly as perhaps typical of those who set themselves as defenders of the yea theory. It seems to me that if this is a satisfactory *touché* no less satisfactory should be some such like rejoinder as: "When Mr. Nathan says that acting is an art, of course he is talking arrant rot—who could doubt it, after witnessing a performance by Mr. Corse Payton."

If an authentic art is anything which may properly be founded upon an exceptionally brilliant performance, then, by virtue of the Reverend Doctor Ernest M. Stires' brilliant performance in it, is pulpitering an art, and, on the strength of Miss Bird Millman's brilliant performance in it, is tight-rope walking an art no less. Superficially a mere dialectic monkey-trick, this is yet perhaps not so absurd as it may seem, for if Duse's art lies in the fact that she breathes life and dynamic effect into the written word of the artist D'Annunzio, Stires' lies in the more substantial fact that he breathes life and dynamic effect into the word of the somewhat greater, and more evasive artist, God. And Miss Millman, too, brings to her quasi-art, movement, colour, rhythm, beauty and—one may even say—a sense of fantastic character, since

the effect she contrives is less that of a dumpy little woman in a short white skirt pirouetting on a taut wire than of an unreal creature, half bird, half woman, out of some forgotten fable.

The circumstance that Duse is an artist who happens to be an actress does not make acting an art any more than the circumstance that Villon was an artist who happened to be a burglar or that Paderewski is an artist who happens to be a politician makes burglary and politics arts. Duse is an artist first, and an actress second: one need only look into her very great share in the creation of the dramas bearing the name of D'Annunzio to reconcile one's self—if not too stubborn, at least in part—to this point of view. So, also, were Clairon, Rachel and Jane Hading artists apart from histrionism, and so too is Sarah Bernhardt: who can fail to detect the creative artist in the "*Mémoires*" of the first named, for instance, or, in the case of the last named, in the fertile impulses of her essays in sculpture, painting and dramatic literature? It is a curious thing that, in all the pronouncements of acting as an art, the names chosen by the advocates as representative carriers of the æsthetic banner are those of actors and actresses who have most often offered evidence of artistic passion in fields separate and apart from their histrionic endeavours. Lemaitre, Salvini, Rachel, Talma, Coquelin, Betterton, Garrick, Fanny Kemble, the Bancrofts, Irving, Tree, and on down—far down—the line to Ditrichstein, Sothorn, Marie Tempest, Guitry, Gemier and the brothers Barrymore—all give testimony, in writing, painting, musicianship, poetry and

dramatic authorship to æsthetic impulses other than acting. Since acting itself as an art is open to question, the merit or demerit of the performances produced from the æsthetic impulses in point is not an issue: the fact seems to be that it has been the artist who has become the actor rather than the actor who has become the artist.

The actor, as I have on another occasion hazarded, is the child of the miscegenation of an art and a trade: of the drama and the theater. Since acting must appeal to the many—this is obviously its only reason for being, for acting is primarily a filter through which drama may be lucidly distilled for heterogeneous theater-goers—it must, logically, be popular or perish. Surely no authentic art can rest or thrive upon such a premise. The great actors and actresses, unlike great fashioners in other arts, have invariably been favourites of the crowd, and it is doubtless a too charitable hypothesis to assume that this crowd has ever been gifted with critical insight beyond cavil. If, therefore, the actor or actress who can sway great crowds is strictly to be termed an artist, why may we not also, by strict definition, similarly term as exponents of an authentic art others who can likewise sway the same crowds: a great politician like Roosevelt, say, or a great lecturer like Ingersoll, or a successful practical theologian like Billy Sunday? (Let us send out these paradox shock-troops to clear the way for the more sober infantry.)

I have said that I have no intention to argue for or against acting as an art yet, for all the circumstance that the case for the prosecution has long seemed the soundest and the most eloquent, there are still sporadic instances of imaginative histrionism that give one reason to ponder. But, pondering, it has subsequently come to the more penetrating critic that what has on such occasions passed for an art has in reality been merely a reflected art: the art of drama interpreted not with the imagination of the actor but, more precisely, *with the imagination of the dramatist.*

In other words, that actor or actress is the most competent and effective whose imagination is successful in meeting literally, and translating, the imagination of the dramatist which has created the rôle played by the particular actor or actress. To name the actor's imagination in such a case a creative imagination is a rather wistful procedure, for it does not create but merely duplicates. Surely no advocate of acting as a creative art would be so bold as to contend that any actor, however great, has ever brought creative imagination to the already full and superb creative imagination of Shakespeare. This would be, on an actor's part, the sheerest impudence. The greatest actor is simply he who is best fitted by figure, voice, training and intelligence not to invade and annul the power of the rôle which a great dramatist has imagined and created. Duse and D'Annunzio were, so to speak, spiritually and physically one: hence the unmatched perfection of the former's histrionism in the latter's rôles. To see Duse is, save one admit one's self critically to the facts, therefore to suffer theoretical art doubts and the convictions of such as Mr. Daly.

It is, of course, the common habit of the prejudiced critic to overlook, in the estimate of acting as an art, the few admirable exponents of acting and to take into convenient consideration only the enormous majority of incompetents. But to argue that acting is not an art simply because a thousand Edmund Breeses and Miss Adele Bloods give no evidence that it is an art is to argue that sculpture is not an art simply because a thousand fashioners of Kewpies and plaster of Paris busts of Charlie Chaplin and Mr. Harding give no evidence in a like direction. Yet the circumstance that there are admittedly excellent actors as well as bad actors establishes acting as an art no more than the circumstance that there are admittedly excellent cuckoo-whistlers as well as bad cuckoo-whistlers establishes the playing of the cuckoo-whistle as an art. If I seem to reduce the comparison to

what appears to be an absurdity, it is because by such absurdities, or elements, is the status of acting in the field of the arts most sharply to be perceived. For if Bernhardt's ever-haunting cry of the heart in "Izeyl" is a peg, however slight, upon which may be hung a strand of the theory that maintains acting as an art, so too, by the strict canon of dialectics, is Mr. Ruben Katz's ever-haunting cry of the cuckoo in the coda of the slow movement of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony.

If acting is an art, the proofs thus far offered are not only unconvincing but fundamentally, on the score of logic, not a little droll. Let us view a few illustrations. If criticism is an art (thus a familiar contention), why is not acting also an art, since both are concerned with re-creating works of art? But the artist's work offered up to the critic is a challenge, whereas the dramatist's work offered up to the actor is a consonance. Criticism is war, whether in behalf of æsthetic friend or against æsthetic foe; acting is agreement, peace. The critic re-creates, in terms of his own personality, the work of another and often emphatically different and antagonistic personality. The actor re-creates, in terms of a dramatist's concordantly imagined personality, his own personality: the result is less re-creation than non-re-creation. In other words, the less the actor creates or re-creates and the more he remains simply an adaptable tool in the hands of the dramatist, the better actor he is. The actor's state is thus what may be termed one of active impassivity. Originality and independence, save within the narrowest of limits, are denied him. He is a literal translator of a work of art, not an independently imaginative and speculative interpreter, as the critic is. The dramatist's work of art does not say to him, as to the critic, "Here I am! What do you, out of all your experience, taste and training, think of me?" It says to him, instead and peremptorily, "Here I am! Think of me exactly as I am, and adapt all of your experience, taste and

training to the interpretation of me exactly as I am!"

Brushing aside the theory that the true artist is the actor who can transform his voice, his manner, his character; who will disappear behind his part instead of imposing himself on it and adding himself to it—a simple feat, since by such a definition the Messrs. Fregoli and Henri De Vries, amazing vaudeville protean actors, are true histrionic artists—Mr. Walkley, in his essay on "The English Actor of Today," bravely takes up the defence from what he regards as a more difficult approach. "In the art of acting as in any other art," he says, "the first requisite is life. The actor's part is a series of speeches and stage directions, mere cold print, an inert mass that has to be raised somehow from the dead. If the actor disappears behind it, there is nothing left but a Golgotha." Here is indeed gay news! Hamlet, Iago, Romeo, Shylock—mere "cold print," inert Shakespearian masses that, in order to live, have to be raised somehow from the dead by members of the Lambs' Club! It is only fair to add that Mr. Walkley quickly takes to cover after launching this torpedo, and devotes the balance of his interesting comments to a prudent and circumspect *pas seul* on the very middle of the controversial teeter-tawter. For no sooner has he described the majestic drama of Shakespeare as "mere cold print, an inert mass that has to be raised somehow from the dead," than he seems suddenly, and not without a touch of horror, to realize that he has ridiculously made of Shakespeare a mere blank canvas and pot of paint for the use of this or that actor whom he has named, by implication and with magnificent liberalism, a Raphael, or a mere slab of cold marble for the sculpturing skill of some sock and buskined Mercié.

II

MODERN evaluation of acting as an unquestionable art takes its key from Rémond de Sainte-Albine, the girlishly

ebullient Frenchman whose pragmatic critical credo was, "If it makes me feel, it is art." While it may be reasonable that a purely emotional art may aptly be criticized according to the degree of emotional reaction which it induces, it is the quality of emotion resident in the critic that offers that reasonableness a considerable confusion. A perfectly attuned and sound emotional equipment—an emotional equipment of absolute pitch, so to speak—is a rare thing, even among critics of brilliant intelligence, taste, imagination and experience. Goethe, Carlyle, Hazlitt, Dryden, Lessing, to mention only five, were psychophysiological units of dubious emotional structure, if we may trust the intimate chronicles. Thus, where much of their critical dramatic writing may be accepted without qualm, a distinct measure of distrust would attach itself to any critical estimate of acting which they might have written or actually did write.

There are, obviously, more or less definite standards whereby we may estimate critical writings of such men as these so far as those criticisms deal with what we may roughly describe as the cerebral or semi-cerebral arts, but there are no standards, even remotely determinable or exact, whereby we may appraise such of their criticisms as deal with the directly and wholly emotional art of acting. It is perhaps not too far a cry to assume that had Mr. William Archer's father been murdered shortly before Mr. Archer witnessed Mr. Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet, Mr. Archer would have been moved to believe Mr. Forbes-Robertson an even greater actor-artist than he believed him under the existing circumstances, or that had Mr. Otto Borchsenius, the Danish journalist-critic, regrettably found himself a victim of syphilis when he reviewed August Lindberg's Oswald, he would have looked on the estimable Lindberg as a doubly impressive exponent of histrionism. Nothing is more aesthetically and artistically dubious and insecure than the appraisal of acting, for it is based upon the quicksands of varying human emotionalism, and of aural and visual

prejudice. Were I, for example, one hundred times more proficient a critic of drama and life than I am, my criticism of acting would none the less remain often arbitrary and erratic, for I would remain constitutionally anæsthetic to a Juliet, however otherwise talented, who had piano legs, or to a Marc Antony who, for all his histrionic power, presented to the vision a pair of knock-knees. This, I well appreciate, is the kind of critical writing that is promptly set down as flippant, yet it is the truth so far as I am concerned and I daresay that it is, in one direction or another, the truth so far as the majority of critics are concerned.

The most that may be said of the soundness of this or that laudatory criticism of an actor's performance is that the performance in point has met exactly—or very nearly—the particular critic's personal notion of how he, as a human being, would have cried, laughed and otherwise comported himself were he an actor and were he in the actor's rôle. The opposite, or denunciatory, phase of such criticism holds a similar truth. If this is not true, by what standards *can* the critic estimate the actor's performance? By the standards of the actors who have preceded this actor in the playing of the rôle, you say? What if the rôle is a new one, a peculiar and novel one, that has not been played before? Again, you say that the rôle may be in an alien drama and that the actor may be an alien, both rôle and performance being foreign to the emotional equipment of the critic. But basic emotions, the foundation of drama, are universal. Still again, what of such dramas as "Œdipus Rex," what of such rôles—this with a triumphant chuckle on your part? I return the chuckle, and bid you read the criticisms that have been written of the actors who have played in these rôles! Invariably the actors have been treated in precisely the same terms and by the same standards as if they were playing, not in the drama of the fifth century before Christ, but in "Fedora," "The Face in the Moonlight" or "The Count of Monte Cristo."

One cannot imagine sound criticism applying to any authentic art the standard of actor criticism that I have noted. Criticism, true enough, is always more or less personal, but, in its operation upon the authentic arts, its personality is ever like a new bottle into which the vintage wine of art has been poured. Criticism of the authentic arts is the result of the impact of a particular art upon a particular critical personality. Criticism of the dubious art of acting is the result of the impact of a particular critical personality upon this or that instance of acting. But if this is even remotely true, you inquire ironically, what of such an excellent instance of acting as Mimi Aguglia's "Salome"; how in God's name may the critic appraise that performance in the manner set down, i.e., in terms of himself were he a stage performer? Well, for all the surface humours of the question, that is actually more or less the way in which he does appraise it. The actor or actress, unlike the artist in more authentic fields, may never interpret emotion in a manner unfamiliar to the critic: the interpretation must be a reflection, more or less stereotyped, of the critic's repertoire of emotions. Thus, where art is original expression, acting is merely the audible expression of a silent expression. In another phrase, expression in acting is predicated upon, and limited by, the expression of the critic. It is, therefore, a mere duplication of expression. And what holds true in the case of the critic so far as acting is concerned obviously holds doubly true in the case of the uncritical public.

III

ACTING at its finest is, however, often a confusing hypnosis; it is not to be wondered at that, fresh from its spell, the critic has mistaken it for a more exalted something than it intrinsically is. The flame and fire of a Duse, the haunt and magic of a Bernhardt, the powerful stage sense of creation of a Moissi—these are not a little befuddling. And, under their serpent-like charm, it is not

incomprehensible that the critic should confound effect and cause. Yet acting, even of the highest order, is intrinsically akin to the legerdemain of a Hermann or Kellar with a Shakespeare or Molière as an assistant to hand over, as the moment bids, the necessary pack of cards or bowl of goldfish. It is trickery raised to its most exalted level; a combination of experience, intelligence and great charm, not revivifying something cold and dead, but releasing something quick and alive from the prison of the printed page.

The actor who contends in favour of his creative art that he must experience within him the feeling of the dramatist, that he must actually persuade himself to feel his rôle with all its turning smiles and tears, speaks nonsense. So, too, must the auditor, yet who would term the auditor a creative artist? The actor who contends in favour of his creative art the exact opposite, that he is, to wit, a creative artist since he must theatrically create the dramatist's moods, illusions and emotions without feeling them himself, also speaks nonsense. For so, too, in such a case as "Electra," or "Ghosts," or "No More Blondes," must the auditor, yet who, again, would term the latter a creative artist? The actor who contends in favour of his creative art that two accomplished actors often "create" the same rôle in an entirely different manner, speaks nonsense yet again. For what is not creation in the first place does not become creation merely because it is multiplied by two. The actor who further contends in behalf of his creative art that if effective acting were the mere trickery that some maintain it to be, any person ordinarily gifted should be able, after a little experiment, to give an effective stage performance, speaks truer than he knows. Some of the most remarkable performances on the stage of the Abbey Theater of Dublin have been given by just such persons. And there are numerous other instances. If acting is an art—and I do not say that it may not be—it at least, as an art, ill bears cross-examination of even the most superficial nature.

IV

ACTING is perhaps less an art than the deceptive echo of an art. It is drama's exalted halloo come back to drama from the walls of the surrounding amphitheater. Criticism of acting too often mistakes the echo for the original voice. Although the analogy wears motley, criticism of this kind operates in much the same manner as if it were to contend that an approximately exact and beautiful Ben Ali Haggin *tableau vivant* reproduction of, say, Velasquez's "The Spinners," was creative art in the sense that the original is creative art. Acting is to the art of the drama much what these so-called living pictures are to the art of painting. If acting is to be termed an art, it is, like the living picture, a freak art, an art with belladonna in its eyes and ever, even at its highest, a bit grotesque.

In his defense of acting as an art equal to that of poetry and literature, Henry Irving has observed, "It has been said that acting is unworthy because it represents feigned emotions, but this censure would apply with equal force to poet or novelist." But would it? The poet and the novelist may feign emotions, but it is their own active imaginations which feign them. The actor merely feigns passively the emotions which the imagination of the poet has actively feigned; if there is feigning, the actor merely parrots it. If there is feigned emotion in, say, the second stanza of Swinburne's "Rococo," and I mount an illuminated platform and recite the stanza very eloquently and impressively, am I precisely feigning the emotion in it or am I merely feigning the emotion that the great imagination of Swinburne has feigned? Feigned or unfeigned, the emotions of the poet come ready-made to the heart and lips of the actor.

Continues Irving further: "It is the actor who gives body to the ideas of the highest dramatic literature—fire, force, and sensibility, without which they would remain for most people mere airy abstractions." What one engages here is the peculiar logic that acting is an art

since it popularizes dramatic literature and makes it intelligible to a majority of dunderheads!

One more quotation from this actor's defense, and we may pass on. "The actor's work is absolutely concrete," he challenges. "He is brought in every phase of his work into direct comparison with existing things. . . . Not only must his dress be suitable to the part which he assumes, but his bearing must not be in any way antagonistic to the spirit of the time in which the play is fixed. The free bearing of the sixteenth century is distinct from the artificial one of the seventeenth, the mannered one of the eighteenth, and the careless one of the nineteenth. . . . The voice must be modulated to the vogue of the time. The habitual action of a rapier-bearing age is different from that of a mail-clad one—nay, the armour of a period ruled in real life the poise and bearing of the body; and all this must be reproduced on the stage. . . . *It cannot therefore be seriously put forward in the face of such manifold requirements that no Art is required for the representation of suitable action!*" The italics are those of one who experiences some difficulty in persuading himself that if Art is required for such things as these—dress, carriage, modulation of voice and carrying a sword—Art, strictly speaking, is no less required in the matter of going to a Quat'-z-Arts costume ball.

Acting is perhaps best to be criticized not as art but as colourful and impressive artifice. Miss Margaret Anglin's Joan of Arc is a more or less admirable example of acting not because it is art but because it is a shrewd, vivid and beguiling synthesis of various intrinsically spurious dodges: black tights to make stout Anglo-Saxon limbs appear Gallicly slender, a telescoping of words containing the sound of *s* to conceal a personal defect in the structure of the upper lip, a maneuvering of the central action up stage to emphasize, through a familiar trick of the theater, the sympathetic frailty of the character which the actress herself physically lacks, two intakes of breath before a

shout of defiance that the effect of the ring of the directly antecedent shout on the part of one of the inquisitors may be diminished. . . . An effective acting performance is like a great explosion; and as TNT is made from nitric acid, which is in turn made from such nitrates as potassium nitrate or saltpeter, which are in turn derived from the salts of decomposed guano, so is a great explosion of histrionism similarly made and derived from numerous—and not infrequently ludicrous and even vulgar—basic elements.

The ill-balanced species of criticism which appraises a histrionic performance as art on the sole ground of the hypnotic effect it produces, with no inquiry into the means whereby that effect is produced, might analogously, were it to pursue this logic, appraise similarly as art the performance of an adept literal hypnotist. And with logic perhaps much more sound. For if acting as an art is to be appraised in the degree of the effect it imparts to, and induces in, the auditor-spectator, surely—if there is any sense at all in such a method of estimate—may certain other such performances as I have suggested be similarly appraised. Criticism rests upon a foundation of logic; whatever it may deal with—æsthetics, emotions, what not—it cannot remove itself entirely from that foundation. Thus, if Mr. John Barrymore is an artist because, by identifying the heart and mind of his auditor-spectator with some such character as Fedya and by suggesting directly that character's tragic *dégringolade*, he can make the auditor-spectator pity and cry, so too an artist—by the rigid canon of æsthetic criticism—was Friedrich Anton Mesmer, who is said to have been able to do the same thing.

What I attempt here is no facile paradox, but a *reductio ad absurdum* designed to show up the fallacy of the prevailing method of actor criticism. In criticism of the established arts, there is no such antic deportment. The critic never confuses the stimulations of jazz music with those of sound music, nor the stimulations of open melodrama with those of more profound drama. From each of these he receives stimulations of a kind: some superficial, some deep. But he inquires, in each instance, into the means whereby the various stimulations were vouchsafed to him. While he recognizes the fact that the sudden and unexpected shooting off of a revolver in "Secret Service" produces in him a sensation of shock as great as the sudden and unexpected shooting off of a revolver in "Hedda Gabler," he does not therefore promptly, and with no further reasoning, conclude that the two sensations are of an æsthetic piece. Nor does he assume that, since the nervous effect of the fall to death in "The Green Goddess" and of the fall to death in "The Master Builder" affect him immediately in much the same way, both sensations are accordingly produced by sound artistic means. Nor, yet again, does he confuse the quality—nor the springs of that quality—of the mood of wistful pathos with which "Poor Butterfly" and "Porgi, Amor" inspire him. But this confusion persists as part and parcel of the bulk of the criticism of acting. For one Hazlitt, or Lamb, or Lewes, or Anatole France who retains, or has retained, his clear discernment before the acted drama, there are, and have been, a number tenfold who have confounded the wonders of the phonograph with the wonders of Josef Haydn.



From the Diary of a Reviewer

By H. L. Mencken

I

Sunday

PLOWING all morning through Viscount Bryce's "Modern Democracies" (Macmillan), the while the church-bells moan and complain, and the hopeful *Goyim* woo their coy and ungrateful god. Bryce, as always, is magnificently dull. Not only does he put his sentences together in an inept and uninspired way; he is also full of soggy platitudes. In brief, the old boy is almost the perfect Anglo-Saxon publicist—a *Times* editorial writer (London or New York) raised to the purple, and without a Harmsworth or an Ochs to inspire him by whispering into his ear. The first half of his first volume is given over wholly to a terrific restatement of the obvious. I open a page at random; it is 87, and on it I find this:

Christianity never has been put in practice. . . . Wars have been as frequent between so-called Christian States as ever they were between those heathen States which Augustine held to be the offspring of sin.

I try again. Here is a sample from page 95:

In one aspect a newspaper is a commercial undertaking. It sells news to those who wish to buy news.

Nachmal! Page 111:

Where every citizen has a vote, with the duty to use it at elections, each of the parties which strive for mastery must try to bring the largest possible number of voters into its ranks.

One more. Page 139:

Habits can be bad as well as good.

And so on, and so on, for nearly 1,200 pages! Specifically, the work is 138

a study of governmental processes in six modern democracies: France, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with a backward glance or two at the democracies of ancient Greece, and an occasional footnote upon the pseudo-democracies of Latin-America. First the learned and venerable author traces the history and nature of the democratic idea, then he examines his six specimens of its application, and then he sums up. Well, what is his verdict? It turns out, in the end, to be less a verdict than a plea. All the great boons and usufructs that the dreamers of the past expected to issue out of democracy have failed, it appears, to materialize. "The faults that belonged to human nature under previous forms of government" have not been obliterated; they have simply been brought up more copiously out of lower and lower strata of human nature. "The belief that the larger the number of those who share in government the more there will be of wisdom, of self-control, of a fraternal and peace-loving spirit has been rudely shattered." Nevertheless, we must continue to suffer and to hope. "Without Faith nothing is accomplished, and Hope is the mainspring of Faith. . . . Democracy will never perish until after Hope has expired." A sad enough conclusion, God knows. Here is a man who has spent sixty years investigating democracy and trying to manufacture a case for it, and now, at the age of 83, the best he can say for it is precisely what a Methodist says for the theory that he will be made an angel in Heaven because he is a bounder in this life. "What better alternative," asks Bryce, "do you offer?" Feebleness piled upon

sadness! Is it an argument for Dr. Quack's Cancer Cure that scientific medicine has no cure that is better? Is it a defense of the imbecile tortures and hazards of childbirth that women have invented no safer way to get children?

The truth is that the eminent viscount has to edit his facts ever so discreetly in order to arrive at even so desperate a variety of optimism as that with which he closes. On almost every page, indeed, he touches them up, and some of the most inconvenient he obliterates altogether. His account of French political morality, for example, is almost ludicrously gingery and inadequate. The plain truth is that politics in France has reached downright appalling depths of demagoguery and corruption, and that the typical French politician is an unmitigated scoundrel. The country is bankrupt today, not because of the cost and ravages of the war, but because of the stealing that went on during and before the war. Statesmanship over there, even more than in the United States, has been reduced to the two noisome enterprises of providing the ruling usurers with constant opportunities for new looting, and keeping the boobery inflamed with incessant doses of new blather. The principal French politicians (all of whom are naturally depicted in encomiastic terms in our American newspapers) are nearly unanimously men whose personal honor is openly questionable — ex-Socialists turned "respectable" by fat jobs, partners in shady financial transactions, blackmailing journalists who have got on, merchants of inflammatory phrases, dealers in public contracts and offices, blacklegs in general practice. During the war not a few of them were for sale to the enemy, and some actually entered upon negotiations. Today, because the show pleases the mob and so makes their jobs safe, they steer the Third Republic hell-bent into enterprises so insane and so full of dynamite that even the most blind of Francophiles must see disaster ahead. Not Lloyd-George himself is more adept at playing

upon the public midriff, or more unconscionable about doing it. Meanwhile, all the ordinary machinery of internal government creaks and falls into ruin. Money rules the roost. The whole administration, high and low, is rotten with graft, office-holders multiply out of all reason, the proletariat is restive and full of gaudy dreams—and the band plays on. Here is a typical democracy at one of its highest points of glory. How long would it have lasted in the war without the aid of the British imperial oligarchy and the American financial oligarchy?

Bryce is constantly falling back upon Switzerland to keep up his hope and courage when even his so-flattering pictures of France and the United States begin to sicken him. But the case of the Swiss really helps him very little, for on the one hand their democracy is by no means the pretty thing that he seems to think it is, and on the other hand its success in those bleak hills certainly does not argue for its soundness in greater states. Democracy works in Switzerland for the same reason that it works in an American village or a Russian *mir*: because the country is small and well-protected (rather on account of the jealousies of its great neighbors than on account of any special valor or sagacity in the Swiss), and is hence not afflicted by the great problems which strain the democratic system elsewhere. The Swiss are so few in numbers that they can run their country directly, almost *viva voce*; with representation reduced to a minimum they get along without professional politicians, the incurable curse of all larger democracies. Even so, they suffer from most of the nuisances of mob-rule, and it is only romance that seeks to conceal the fact. All the political perunas that entertain the yokels of our own West, from sumptuary laws to the initiative and referendum, are prodigiously on tap in Switzerland, and as prodigiously productive of political *Katsenjammer*. If you still believe that this ancient republic of hill-men and hotel-keepers is a Paradise, then all I ask is that you read its con-

stitution. The document is so long that it will take you two or three days, and in it you will find every piece of nonsense that afflicts the peasants of Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska and the Dakotas. The Swiss, indeed, are more relentlessly governed than any other people in Europe, and show all the worst effects of the democratic mania to iron out distinction and bring every man down to the level of a country constable or city delicatessen dealer. In return for the free exercise of their excessive passion for equality, they have sacrificed almost every element that gives a nation genuine leadership in human progress. They are a people of solid and indubitable virtues; honesty is as common among them as it is rare elsewhere; they are admirable neighbors. But it would be absurd to say that their system tends to produce first-rate men—the only sort of men who, in the long run, really count.

In his summary of the defects observable in democracy Lord Bryce lists (a) the instability of the executive, (b) the neglect of law and order, (c) the waste of public funds, (d) the dishonesty of both voters and representatives, (e) the corruption of justice, (f) the dominance of political parties, (g) the prosperity of professional politicians, *i.e.*, of professional thieves and vagabonds, and (h) the power of money. A depressing roll, to be sure, but it seems to me that he quite overlooks the worst curse of all. That is the curse of excessive and extravagant legislation—the insatiable thirst of the mob to put all of its childish prejudices, ignoble fears and mouldy aspirations into harsh laws, frankly aimed at its superiors. This maniacal legalism is fast bringing the United States to a pretty pass, indeed. Two-thirds of the enterprises that entertain civilized men, whether they relate to intellectual occupation or to social relaxation, are now unlawful in the Republic, and, what is worse, constant efforts are made to force such civilized men into acts and even thoughts that are congenitally obnoxious to them. The American has lost almost the last vestige of per-

sonal liberty—the only thing that is genuinely valuable in this life. He cannot write a book without submitting it to the censorship of sexual invalids; he cannot divert himself with amour without conforming to the stock-farm morality of *mushiks* and corner grocers; he cannot dine without having his inferiors spit into his wine-glass; he is even forbidden to take any part in the discussion of public problems unless his ideas are strictly in accord with the prevailing balderdash. Most of the defects of democracy listed by Bryce, though they reveal the incurable swinishness of the thing itself, do not bear with especial harshness upon the civilized minority. The instability of the executive does not interest it; it can discern no substantial difference between two such hollow fellows as Woodrow and Harding. Its members stand in no peril of being lynched. If the courts are corrupt, so much the better for them. (Think of what our Federal judges read into the law when they try to be honest!) Party strife does not interest them; they assume that all politicians, of whatever party, are rogues. The waste of public funds falls most heavily on the majority which delights in it. The power of wealth benefits the minority more than it hinders it. But democracy as an ethical and cultural agent, democracy when it is most honest and even most altruistic, is its eternal enemy. Here the issue is clearly joined between the interests of the great multitude of undifferentiated human bacteria and the interests of the small faction that includes all the salient and autonomous individuals of the nation.

Just as he forgets this fact in rehearsing the defects of democracy, so does the noble lord omit his best bet when he rehearses its merits. The principal virtue of democracy is that it makes a good show—one incomparably bizarre, amazing, shocking, obscene. The spectator must sweat in the hot sun and upon a hard bench, and he must expect to be hoofed at intervals by his neighbors and maybe clouted anon by the *Polizei*, but he is shaken with endless

roars; he enjoys the superb merriment of a god witnessing an epidemic of delirium tremens; he gets his money's worth.

II

Monday

ALL the bones in my body are intact. I have never broken humerus or radius, femur or tibia. In consequence, I have never been laid up with nothing to do, and in consequence of that consequence I have never read "Alice in Wonderland." It seems somehow indecent, and yet it is a fact. Of course, I know what the book is about—one acquires such knowledge, in literate society, by a sort of osmosis—and I probably quote it as often as another, but I have never actually read it, and shall probably never do so until I come down upon the ice in my senility and go to bed for six weeks with a cracked hip. When I finish it, I shall read "The Pilgrim's Progress," another book that I have never so much as opened. Years ago I made up my mind to read it, but presently the late Major General Roosevelt began quoting it, and he scared me off: I was already privy to the singular badness of his taste in books. After "The Pilgrim's Progress," I'll tackle "The Dunciad," and then "Wuthering Heights," and then "The Brothers Karamazov," and then the Bhagavad Gita, and then Ibsen's "Kejser og Galilaer," and then Gibbon's "Decline and Fall." I once tried "The Brothers Karamazov" on board ship, but it made me so sleepy that I turned from it to Morley's "Life of Gladstone," borrowed from the ship library—a potent soporific, but not as effective in my case as Dostoevsky. Of large reaches of George Meredith I am densely ignorant; of George Eliot I am almost wholly so. I tried to read "Adam Bede" at the age of twelve, and it bored me so fearfully that I had to give it up, and have never gone back to it. Yet less than a year later I was reading "Henry Esmond," and enjoying it. "Sartor Resartus" was beyond my comprehension when I attempted it, proba-

bly at fourteen, and it gave me such a distaste for Carlyle that I was beyond thirty-five before I could read "The French Revolution." I was actually nearly forty when I first read "Frederick the Great." It was worth waiting for: a stupendous piece of work, never sufficiently to be praised. I must have picked up a lot of Carlyle from the air in my twenties, for when I read him at last he seemed like an old friend. No living man is to be mentioned in the same breath with old Thomas. There was in him something of the austere magnificence, the remote and awe-inspiring massiveness, of his own heroes. Think of a Frederick done by a Carlyle! A Ulysses done by a Homer!

There is a tremendous amount of tosh written about books. All the Hamilton Wright Mabies, Matthew Arnolds and James Russell Lowells praise the same celebrated works, and often they are dull and fly-blown. If I have to go to hell for it, I must here set down my conviction that much of "The Divine Comedy" is piffle. So is nine-tenths of Byron. Byron fascinated me at fifteen; today he makes me laugh. He was a sort of premature Greenwich Villager, and would have been snickered into obscurity if he had not been a noble lord. There are books by Anatole France that make me snore, for example, "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard." I can read Tolstoi, a fearful old ass, but not Turgenev, apparently a man of sense. Pope's "Essay on Man" seems to me to be comparable to a piano piece by Eduard Holst. As for Browning, his poetry classifies itself in my mind with the New Thought: it is cacophonous as poetry and puerile as philosophy. Browning, so far as I have been able to make out, never had an idea that was beyond the comprehension of a schoolmarm. His so-called complexity is merely stupidity. Washington Irving I can't read. Prescott I can get through, for his story is always hair-raising, but his style is that of a United States Senator. Poe's tales, with a few exceptions, seem tedious to me, and much of his poetry strikes me as hollow jingling,

but his criticism is my delight. Cooper appears to me to be separated by but little from the dime-novelists. Emerson is an agreeable old dodo—a sort of vast hopper of borrowed and undigested ideas, many of them idiotic. That Carlyle viewed him with respect is one of the great mysteries of letters. But didn't Mark Twain venerate Howells? And hasn't Joseph Conrad praised Henry James? Hawthorne, Whitman, Melville, even Bierce—here we encounter nobler fowl. But nothing has ever been written in America to surpass "Huckleberry Finn." It is rather more than a mere book; it is almost a whole literature.

III

Tuesday

CARL VAN DOREN's "The American Novel" (*Macmillan*), which I reviewed at length in No. 2922 of *The Nation* (cheek by jowl, by the way, with a letter from a Methodist bishop!), is an extremely artful and useful work, for it manages to combine the sobriety and diligence of academic criticism with the bolder manner and wider intelligence of the criticism that now makes the professors jump. The simple device of confining his book to the novel gives Van Doren a great advantage from the start. All the other general historians of the national letters have been distracted and run amok by the other varieties of literature, some of which shade imperceptibly into politics, ethics, theology and sociology, and so bring in questions that are fatal to æsthetic inquiry. Even our poetry is full of quicksands, for whether one heads toward the left and Whitman or toward the right and Whittier one encounters polemics and an end to the divine frenzy. But the novel in America, despite the capital exception of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," has been singularly free from didactic purpose, and so it may be studied without distraction. Van Doren's study of it, it seems to me, is well-informed, tolerant and sagacious, and often not a little profound. From end to end—he stops with the year 1900—he relates its development

to the general cultural history of the Republic, and more than once his investigation of cultural cause and literary effect is extremely illuminating. Of especial interest is his revelation of forgotten steps. Books that die almost as soon as they are born are often curiously influential, and this has been true more than once in the history of American literature. Nobody today, I suppose, reads Col. John W. DeForest's "Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty" or Joseph Kirkland's "Zury," and not many seem to read even Henry Adams' "Democracy" or E. W. Howe's "The Story of a Country Town," and yet all of them marked distinct advances in the practice of the novelist's art among us, and are hence of far more importance to the literary historian than such universally read works as "Ben-Hur," "Graustark" and "Richard Carvel."

Van Doren's judgments, in the main, are stated with great plausibility, and he is very careful to avoid poll-parrotting the stale dicta of the text-books. It seems to me that he is a bit too kind to Cooper, a novelist whose colossal defects quite swamp his few genuine merits, and that he lets down Howells rather easily. But here there is room for honest men to differ. His discussions of Hawthorne, James and Mark Twain are extraordinarily unhackneyed and penetrating, and he very eloquently presents the cases of novelists who have fallen into undeserved neglect, notably Melville. Altogether, he has made a valuable book, and it will drum up an eager audience for the volume that is to follow—on the living novelists of the United States.

IV

Wednesday

My somewhat heretical theory, often set forth in this place, that W. L. George is the most competent of all the younger novelists now in practice in England is given a good deal of collateral support by his new book, "Hail, Columbia!" (*Harper*), not, to be sure, a novel at all, but certainly one of the

most intelligent volumes on These States and their people ever written by a visiting man of letters. I say *one* of the most intelligent volumes, but where is there another to match it? I can think of none. It avoids altogether the suffocating flattery of the Americano that one usually finds in such books, and it avoids too the ignorant and offensive sneering that commonly lies half-concealed under the flattery. The last chapter, "Parthian Shots," is a truly admirable summary of the basic facts of American life—a summary showing a fine instinct for the salient and significant, a quite remarkable grasp of the American point of view, and a sensitive understanding of weaknesses and difficulties. There is, from end to end of it, not the slightest trace of blather; George nowhere seeks to pay his dinner debts (like many of his predecessors) by making gifts of marshmallows; even when he discusses the possibility of an Anglo-American war he is honest and sensible. But this frankness is wholly uncontaminated by the customary British superiority. When he says that he likes the United States one believes him, for he proves it by describing phases of Americanism that are genuinely admirable, and by dealing with the other side of the medal in a way that shows him to be clearly conscious that what is bad here is often even worse nearer home. I like the book immensely. It is temperate, accurate, sympathetic, shrewd and instructive. And it is written with grace and address.

One of the things that sticks in my mind, after putting it down, is an uneasy feeling that I know my own country—that is, physically, regionally—a good deal less than I ought to know it. It is hard to find a German who has not been in all the four quarters of the empire, or an Englishman, at least of any education, who has not traversed England from Cornwall to the Scotch border, or even a Frenchman who has not visited, at all events, the principal towns of France, but here in our over-swollen Republic only drummers and actors ever complete the Grand Tour. George,

in his six months, actually covered more ground than I have covered in forty years, and yet I have by no means sat by the fire. He speaks delightedly of towns that I know only as flashes of light in the night: Indianapolis, Omaha, Dayton, Kansas City, Charleston—and of others that I have never even glimpsed: Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Atlanta, Birmingham, New Orleans. He went through Sing Sing prison; I have yet to get beyond the House Office Building in Washington. He disported himself in Chicago as I have long sneakily desired to disport myself, but never with the chance. He got into states that I am curious about but know nothing of. He came to close grips with varieties of Americanos who are polite and confiding to visiting Englishmen, but would be afraid of a man at home in New York and with whispers of antinomianism against him. Some day, when I tire of work, I shall penetrate to the remotest fastnesses of the land, disguised as a chautauqua orator or seller of 10% bonds. I have a vast inquisitiveness about West Virginia, which lies within a hundred miles of my home, and yet all I know of it is a string of railroad yards and back gates. If I die before I see Arkansas, and New Mexico, and the Dakotas and Vermont, I shall go to hell full of regrets. How ignorant, indeed, a man may be, and yet go unchanged! I have never seen the Chicago stockyards, or Harvard University, or the New Orleans levee, or the Maine woods, or the empty beer-cellars of Milwaukee, or the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, or Puget Sound, or the adulterous paradise of the Los Angeles movie-actors. I have seen Reno, but not Lake Mohonk; Key West, but not Brooklyn; the Golden Gate, but not Lookout Mountain; Grant's tomb, but not the Little Big Horn; St. Louis, but not the Soo; Pittsburgh, but not Oklahoma. I was in Jersey City the other day for the first time in this life—that is, beyond the train-shed. I have never seen the Rio Grande, or Lake Superior, or Monticello, or Plymouth Rock, or Detroit.

. . . Well, Nathan beats me. He has never been to Washington.

V

Thursday

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S "Back to Methuselah" (*Brentano*) leaves me gasping: for the first time I find myself quite unable to read him. His preface is amusing enough: the ideas in it are precisely those of the Sunday stories in the *New York American*. But his five plays floor me. What could be more hopeless than one more reworking of the old buffoonery about Adam and Eve in the Garden—the very first thought of Greenwich Village radicals when they set out to shock the bourgeoisie? It is dull stuff, indeed. I give it up.

VI

Friday

DR. JOHN W. ROBERTSON'S "Edgar A. Poe: a Study" (*Brough*) is a large work in two parts, both spoiled by irritating and senseless repetitions and garrulities. The first part represents an effort by an alienist to diagnose the mental condition of Poe: the verdict is that he was a congenital dipsomaniac, which, despite the popular opinion, is not identical with a drunkard. Poe, at intervals, went upon herculean drunks, but he was quite truthful when he said that he disliked drink. A few drinks, even one drink, sufficed to knock him out. When he got over his *Katzenjammer* (which was always very severe) he went on the water-wagon, and led the life of a Baptist clergyman until the next grand bust. Dr. Robertson supports his case convincingly; for one, I believe him. Ah, that he had held himself to a scientific parsimony in his exposition, and not thrown in so much miscellaneous chattiness! The second part of his book is devoted to the bibli-

ography of Poe. Here again, the doctor is an expert, for he owns one of the largest collections of Poeana in existence. But every fact that he presents is presented at least twice, and some of them bob up six or eight times. The result is that a valuable work is often made horribly dull.

VII

Saturday

"THE FOUNDING OF NEW ENGLAND," by James Truslow Adams (*Atlantic Monthly*): an extremely learned and laborious work, competently organized and relentlessly documented, but written throughout in so tedious a style that all its natural interest is pumped out of it. . . . "Tertium Organum," by P. D. Ouspensky (*Manas*): a mystical treatise by a Russian vouched for by Claude Bragdon. This is the tenth day I have tackled it, but it still eludes me. Such stuff requires a special type of mind for the comprehension of it. I am, I suspect, far too earthy for it. . . . "Psychology and the Unconscious," by D. H. Lawrence (*Seltzer*): an effective, if unwitting, *reductio ad absurdum* of the current doctrine that Lawrence is a profound thinker. The notion he displays in the book is briefly this: that the seat of the soul (whatever it may be) is in the solar plexus. This is described on the slipcover as "an entirely original contribution in the field of psychoanalysis, a discovery as amazing to the layman as Einstein's relativity theory, but one of those simple discoveries that only the greatest geniuses make." All this is simply silly. The solarplexusocentric theory has been held by New Thinkers for years, and is the subject of a pamphlet by Elizabeth Towne, the Mother Eddy of the movement. Lawrence simply swathes it in new absurdities. His book is not merely bad; it is downright childish.

